

Aylesham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118563
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358385
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leon King
Headteacher	Abigail Birch
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised the school's development plan, tracking data, pupils' work, minutes of governing body meetings and school policies. They also analysed questionnaires completed by 112 parents and carers, 99 pupils and 20 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether recent rises in pupils' attainment in English, particularly writing, and mathematics, are being consolidated.
- What might still need improving in teaching to help maintain pupils' gains in their learning and enjoyment.
- How well the curriculum fosters pupils' learning, particularly for those who are vulnerable or who are more able.
- How well the school promotes community cohesion, particularly at the national and global levels.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school, serving its local village community. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and a small number have a statement of special educational needs. The range of needs covers behavioural, social, emotional and physical needs. The school was given a notice to improve following its inspection in October last year. The school had a visit from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in May 2010 to monitor how well it was progressing. A Nursery is located within the school's grounds, but is managed privately so was not included in this inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises one Reception class and one mixed age class with Reception and Year 1 children. The school has the Healthy Schools status, reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Aylesham Primary is a good school. It has improved very quickly and successfully since its inspection last year which highlighted weaknesses in pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils, parents and carers recognise that changes have been rapid, prompted by the concerted and effective efforts of senior leaders and staff to tackle weaknesses.

Children enjoy school and behave well. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'My child loves school and is very happy.' Pupils' attitudes to learning mean that they work hard and this has paid off in terms of how well they make progress. A good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage sets them up well for their move into Years 1 and 2, where some pupils this year reached above average attainment levels. In Years 3 to 6, a legacy of very slow progress and below average attainment by Year 6 has been reversed. Recent national tests results are the best for several years and indicate a significant rise in reading and mathematics. The school's checks on pupils' progress in science also indicate a rise. Writing standards have also improved, but at a slower rate. Pupils make generally good progress through Years 1 to 6, although this varies between classes as there are still variations in teaching quality and planning for some activities and, for some pupils, the climb to make up for past slower progress has been steep. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well as do those few pupils from minority ethnic heritages. The school keeps a close watch on their progress and provides good support matched to their needs. When pupils leave the school, although they are making up ground more quickly than in recent years, they currently reach average attainment levels in their work, but achieve well given their starting points.

Staff analyse weaker areas of the schools work carefully as their efforts have been managed and orchestrated well by senior leaders. They are not content to be just a 'good' school. In a short time, senior leaders, aided by good external support, have ensured that a greater proportion of lessons are well taught, that the curriculum is better matched to pupils' interests and basic skills are taught systematically. Gains in pupils' mathematical and reading abilities are notable successes. In writing, pupils' confidence and skills have improved, but not at the same quick rate, and their writing is not yet at the level expected in terms of quality of content or spelling accuracy. Boys in particular are not always enthused to write or study, so their achievement lags behind the girls at times. Some aspects of the school's work, such as promoting community cohesion, have not been a high priority. As a result, the pupils' knowledge and understanding of others much further from the school is not sufficiently well developed.

Senior leaders, supported ably by governors have, in a relatively short time, addressed key areas of improvement and moved the expectations of both pupils and staff 'up a gear' in

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trying to become an excellent school. Good self-evaluation, with detailed and systematic analysis of teaching and pupils' progress, has led to quick action to correct emerging weaker areas. Given this rate of improvement, also noted in the monitoring visit that took place in May 2010, and the outcomes of the inspection, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 during the coming academic year by:
 - giving pupils, particularly boys, more guidance and motivating activities to help improve their writing skills and confidence
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are stretched in their learning
 - ensuring that the school's marking policy is consistently applied in every class.
- Raise all pupils' awareness of others with differing backgrounds and beliefs this coming academic year by:
 - developing a link with a school in a contrasting global locality
 - develop and extend the links with the school in Essex so that more pupils can become involved in exchanging views, ideas and experiences about where they live, what they do and what they think is important.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In English, mathematics, science and the project-based curriculum, teachers usually provide pupils with good opportunities and interesting contexts in which to learn and practise their literacy and number skills. As a result, their attainment has risen to average levels. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons. This was evident in a Year 2 writing lesson where pupils worked hard to compose simple poems having learnt basic letter combination sounds to improve their spelling skills. In a Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils enjoyed reading a poem and improvising simple drama skills to illustrate their particular part of the poem. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed working out different combinations of colours for a pencil case. While pupils make good progress generally, which is a clear improvement on previous performance, the more able do not always get the challenge they need to deepen their learning or widen their skills, such as applying information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their day-to-day work.

The school's detailed systems to keep track of pupils' progress show that pupils eligible for free school meals and those at the early stages of learning English also make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 6. Where pupils receive additional support from teaching assistants, they are given good care and patient guidance. Consequently, they make good progress. Pupils say they feel safe in school and while they behave well, they are honest enough to admit that behaviour 'has its moments'. Pupils adopt healthy living principles, know the importance of a balanced diet, and many attend a range of sports clubs and activities. Morning 'wake and shake' sessions are a highlight enjoyed by pupils. Pupils make a strong contribution to their own and the wider community by being 'play pals', 'buddies' or through the work of the school council and leadership team. These responsible positions in school, their mature attitudes and increasingly secure basic skills

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help pupils prepare well for their next schools. While pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good, their cultural development is a weaker aspect as pupils' knowledge of others from differing backgrounds or beliefs is not as well developed.

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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Revisions to the curriculum, which are now becoming more established through the school, aid the progress that pupils make. Mornings, which tend to focus upon basic skills, include systematic provision to ensure that basic skills are taught well in most respects. Afternoons focus more on project work and although links to include basic skills into these projects are increasing, not all activities provide frequent enough opportunities for pupils to extend the use of their basic English, mathematical or ICT skills in their project work. Teaching, which has generally improved since the last inspection, now ensures that more lessons are effectively taught. Lessons are usually well organised and teachers foster good relationships which aid pupils' learning and their willingness to work hard. Good use of interactive whiteboards helps enliven the pupils' interests and practical 'hands on' work is a regular and productive feature of lessons. On occasions, more able pupils are not stretched sufficiently in their learning and some overly long discussions or teacher-led explanations, mean that these pupils mark time. Clear aims of lessons, shared with pupils to help them gauge how well they make progress, are positive features. Teachers' use of assessment is a strong feature of many lessons. Simple 'traffic lights', 'two stars and a

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wish' and pupils giving classmates some clues about how to improve their contributions help pupils improve their progress. Teachers' marking is regular, although varies from comments which usefully identifies how pupils can improve to others which tend only to give praise rather than guidance. This is partly because the school's marking policy is not adopted equally well in all classes. Extra-curricular activities, well attended by pupils, help broaden their horizons. The good care and guidance provided by the school help pupils behave well, feel safe and get a taste of responsibility for others' well-being as well as their own. This ensures that playtimes are happy and active times. Pupils who are vulnerable are supported very well, particularly those who have severe special needs. Links with parents are high profile and effective as they are seen as important to help support pupils' learning and wellbeing. Links with outside agencies and professionals aid pupils' academic and emotional development well.

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?

Underpinning the school's rapid improvement are senior managers who have not only managed to get the school 'back on track', but improved things to a good level in a relatively short time. They set about addressing issues from the last inspection by a close and detailed analysis of teaching quality, rates of progress made by different groups of pupils and critical self-evaluation to pinpoint where further improvements were possible. The marked turnaround in pupils' attainment and progress has been achieved through a rise in teachers' expectations, regular monitoring, coaching of individual staff and good external support. Improvements to the quality of teaching means more lessons are taught well, although the school recognises that some inconsistencies still need addressing. The governing body reviewed its members' roles prior to the last inspection and these are proving successful in most respects in monitoring the progress the school has made. Visits to the school are regular and usually well documented, although these have tended to focus on key areas of raising attainment. The governing body, along with staff, recognise that other areas of the school's work have sometimes taken second place. An example is the school's promotion of community cohesion, which is good in terms of local links and in the way pupils relate and respect each other within the school. Links have been formed with a school in Essex, although there is scope for further development of the work here so that more pupils from both schools have the opportunity to exchange views and ideas. However, the possibility of forming links with a school in a contrasting global locality has not yet been fully exploited. The governing body and staff have ensured that most groups of pupils now achieve well and they monitor closely where pupils need extra support. They work effectively at making sure there is no discrimination and pupils have equal

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opportunities to attend clubs or benefit from available funding. Safeguarding routines are good, with checks on staffing, health and safety and child protection responsibilities clearly identified. The governing body and senior staff are vigilant about how further improvements can be made and are quick to take action to rectify any areas highlighted for improvement.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children continue to make good progress, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. They start school with a range of abilities, which are generally below typical expectations, and make good progress. By the start of Year 1, attainment is at the levels expected for their age, but an increasing proportion is reaching higher levels. Children relate well to each other while developing secure basic number and writing skills. Their social skills develop particularly well as they relate easily to each other. Simple activities such as constructing imaginary crocodiles from basic building bricks or painting self-portraits to identify the names of facial features help extend their imaginative, artistic or manipulative skills. Number skills are taught systematically, although occasionally activities are not pitched at the right level to stretch those more-able children, while supporting those who need more basic tasks. In other activities, some children are left for slightly too long before adults give an extra boost to flagging interest levels or guidance to extend their learning. Children's physical abilities are promoted well by the range of activities they can take part in, although the outside area is smaller than it was at the last inspection due to the nursery becoming privately run. This means that the range of activities that children can take part in is more restricted. That said, teachers try to compensate where they can. In an activity in the hall, children enjoyed collecting the teachers' imaginary bean bag 'treasure'-activities which helped boost their exercise levels well. An extension to the outside area is planned to be completed shortly. The welfare of children is high profile and

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assessment routines regularly provide good levels of information about how children progress. Good levels of teaching, promoted by effective leadership, ensure that provision remains at the good levels noted at the inspection last year.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

There was a good response to the Ofsted questionnaire, although only a small proportion of returns included additional comments. There were slightly more containing positive comments than negative. Those pointing to worries or to improvements needed were often very specific to individual circumstances rather than general pointers noted for improvement. Comments ranged from those who would like more information on pupils' progress to those hoping that school dinners could be more appetising. Positive comments tended to voice how much their children enjoyed school. Inspectors found that the school had a variety of ways to communicate with parents and carers about pupils' progress, including reports, open evenings, and one-to-one meetings with parents or carers. School dinners have been monitored carefully by both pupils themselves and the school. Both report improvements to them.

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 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 197 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	53	45	40	8	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	49	55	49	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	37	33	59	53	16	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	34	59	53	10	9	4	4
The teaching is good at this school	45	40	56	50	9	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	34	60	54	13	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	35	65	58	7	6	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)	36	32	56	50	12	11	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	34	61	54	10	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	29	60	54	12	11	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	33	61	54	11	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	38	53	47	12	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	46	49	44	9	8	1	1

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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



15 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aylesham Primary School, Canterbury, CT3 3BS

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We think you and the staff have worked really hard to make the school not only a better school, but it is now a good school. Well done!

Here are some of the things we found out.

- The children in the Reception classes enjoy all of the activities that take place.
- You behave well, try hard in lessons and appreciate help from your 'buddies' and 'play pals'.
- You are now reaching average levels when you leave and achieving well in most aspects of your work, so well done!
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult or are learning to speak English.
- You keep active at playtimes and try to eat healthily when you can.
- Adults work hard to make sure you feel valued, safe and a part of what's going on.
- The teaching is usually good, which helps you to learn well in most lessons.
- The headteacher and staff have been really good at spotting what needs doing then deciding what is most important, then getting things done.

We have asked the school to do two things to help it improve further.

- Ensure that all of you make good progress all of the time, particularly in your writing, and including those of you who can do harder work. We think that boys could do a little better in their work as well.
- Develop more links with other schools so you get to find out about other children who live in a different type of area, country and who are different to you.

You can help your teachers by keeping up your good behaviour and willingness to help others.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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