

Smeeth Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118381
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358331
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Robin Gaff

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Mackay
Headteacher	Paul Dawson
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2008
School address	Caroland Close Smeeth Ashford TN25 6RX
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited eight lessons for 20 minutes or longer, observing all six teachers in the school at least once. The inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons, assemblies and other activities in order to observe the pupils' learning. They held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation and planning documents, policies and procedures, as well as the school's own analysis of pupils' attainment and progress. A total of 67 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were received and analysed, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Smeeth is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. These cover a range of additional needs, including moderate learning and behavioural difficulties. A higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal times for transfer. The school has regularly exceeded the government's floor target with regard to pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6. There were significant changes in staffing in 2009. The current Chair of the Governing Body was elected in October 2008. The school gained Healthy School status in 2009, and was re-awarded Artsmark Gold and the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2009 and 2011 respectively. It runs a breakfast club each day for up to 20 pupils. A privately run after-school club operates on the school site: this is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

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	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- Smeeth is a good school which fulfils its aim of providing a broad and balanced education for all its pupils. It gives them a rich variety of experiences, particularly through its excellent range of enrichment activities.
- Pupils' attainment has risen steadily in recent years. Pupils achieve well in a wide range of subjects.
- Children make a good start to their education when they join the school, developing their self-confidence and independence, as well as their communication and creative skills.
- Pupils enjoy school a good deal. They particularly appreciate their opportunities for practical work during events such as science and arts weeks, as well the wide range of sporting events in which a great many of them participate.
- Pupils do not always have enough chances to improve their communication skills by writing about activities in different subject areas.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers include a good range of activities in their lessons to meet the needs and engage the interest of pupils from different ages and with different abilities. They do not always make sure that pupils know exactly how well they are doing, or the precise targets for which they should be aiming.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and are not unduly worried about bullying because they say it is rare and dealt with effectively by the school.

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- Leaders have accurately evaluated the school's performance and have implemented initiatives which have succeeded in improving pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics. They recognise the need to ensure that teachers throughout the school have more opportunities to share best practice.
- The governing body has contributed well to the school's improvement by appropriately challenging its leaders.
- Parents and carers express considerable appreciation for most aspects of the school's performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing throughout the school by giving pupils more opportunities to use their writing skills in different subject areas.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by giving teachers more opportunities to share the expertise that is already within the school.
- Ensure that all pupils know what levels they are currently achieving and are clear about the targets for which they should be aiming.

Main report

Pupils start school with skill levels which are broadly in line with those found nationally. In their first year, they develop their ability to work on their own, and to play and learn together with other children. They make good progress in learning to link sounds to letters, in forming letters accurately and in writing simple sentences. Year 1 pupils are very keen to share the stories they have written with visitors, and their reading skills by the age of six are just above those expected for their age. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment overall, and in reading, is above average. This represents good progress from their starting points. Potentially vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least as good progress as their classmates. This is because of the effective support they receive from their teachers and from teaching assistants, and because teachers vary tasks appropriately to meet their needs.

National test results in 2009 showed a dip in attainment in mathematics. The school has successfully addressed this by modifying its approach to teaching the subject, with the result that pupils' attainment and progress have improved significantly. Pupils throughout the school talk confidently about their work, and read fluently and expressively. However, their progress in writing has been more limited because tasks they are given do not always relate to the pupils' wider experience of learning. When pupils have opportunities to describe activities that have fully engaged their interest,

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for example when Year 5 pupils reported on a recent residential visit, they can write expressively, imaginatively and accurately.

Inspectors observed pupils throughout the school participating enthusiastically in 'science week' projects, and learning a lot about forces such as magnetism and the properties of different materials. The quality of art work on display around the school indicates pupils' very good achievement in this area. The high levels of attainment of many pupils in physical education is demonstrated by the school's success in sporting events and tournaments, in which its teams often compete with those from much larger establishments. All pupils develop their presentation skills, and their self-confidence, by taking part in regular music and drama productions. This, together with their good grasp of communication and mathematical skills, prepares them well for the next stage of their education and for future employment.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of work and behaviour, and relate well to them. As one parent said, 'The school creates an atmosphere in which children want to do their best'. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults ensure that children benefit from an appropriate balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities, and provide a good variety of resources to support indoor and outdoor learning and play. They monitor children's progress carefully so that they can match activities to their interests and development. Adults give parents and carers detailed information about their children's progress, to help them support their learning at home.

Teachers throughout the school ensure that lessons proceed at a good pace, and provide sufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils as well as for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In an outstanding English lesson, the teacher enabled pupils to benefit from an extremely well planned sequence of activities which ensured that they made excellent progress in writing increasingly sophisticated sentences. She included plenty of opportunities for pupils to help each other to develop their work and to present it to the class. Teachers use good questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding, and to modify activities when pupils make faster or slower than expected progress in the course of lessons. Occasionally, they include too many activities, so that there is not enough time at the end of sessions for them to reinforce pupils' learning. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and make sure pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. However, pupils do not always know the current levels at which they are working, and the ones which they should be aiming to reach.

Pupils' behaviour makes a good contribution to their learning. They are respectful and attentive to their teachers, and are prepared to listen to and learn from one another in lessons. They behave sensibly around the school, and understand and support school rules. Pupils show a good appreciation of moral issues, for example the importance of fair play in sport, which teachers discuss with them in assemblies, and they respectfully observe opportunities for prayer and reflection. Pupils are punctual and their attendance is above the national average. The school has been particularly successful in improving the behaviour of the small number of pupils who

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have found it more difficult to conform to the school's expectations. As a result, pupils report that their learning is very seldom disrupted. Pupils feel safe in school because they say the adults look after them well, and they know who to go to if they have any concerns. One group of pupils said, 'This is a friendly school where everyone knows each other.' The school ensures that pupils understand the potential dangers posed by modern technology, including use of the internet. Pupils who have been trained as peer mentors help to resolve any disputes and to deal with the rare occurrences of bullying. The breakfast club provides a secure and welcoming environment for those pupils who attend, and helps them to prepare well for the school day. Almost all the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the standard of behaviour in the school is good, and that their children feel safe there.

The headteacher and his senior staff have succeeded in minimising the potentially negative impact of changes in staffing on pupils' learning and progress. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and recognise that it is consistently good. With the support of the local authority, they have worked successfully to improve aspects of weaker teaching, but have not yet given teachers sufficient opportunities to share the outstanding practice that exists within the school. Leaders ensure that staff understand and support their high aspirations for the school. Together with the staff, leaders regularly assess and closely monitor the attainment and progress of individuals and groups of pupils, and intervene to support any that are at risk of underachieving. Leaders have significantly improved pupils' achievement in mathematics by enabling pupils to benefit from small group teaching and from individual support when they need it. The headteacher has a strong presence around the school, and pupils, as well as parents and carers, know that he and his colleagues will listen and respond promptly to their concerns. The governing body is actively involved in school life. It has increased its capacity to set the strategic direction of the school, and is very much prepared to challenge school leaders and to hold them to account. The effectiveness of the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is demonstrated by its success in narrowing gaps in performance between different groups, including for potentially vulnerable pupils, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is a harmonious community where pupils from different backgrounds relate very well to one another. There have been no incidents of racist behaviour in recent years and there is no evidence of any discrimination. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about different cultures and traditions elsewhere in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils, including vetting staff appointments and ensuring that staff receive appropriate training, are robust. Pupils, including those who join the school at other than the normal time for transfer, settle in quickly, and the school has improved the effectiveness of its engagement with parents and carers. Although a few of them reported concerns, for example about the way in which the school helps them to support their children's learning, a very large majority agreed that the school ensures that their children are well looked after, and meets their individual needs. The school has consolidated, and in some cases improved

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upon, good practice highlighted by its last inspection, and has successfully addressed the weaknesses that the report identified. This, together with its leaders' effectiveness in improving the quality of provision, and their strong commitment to promoting pupils' achievement and well-being, demonstrates its good capacity for further, sustained improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Smeeh Community 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 136 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	45	67	22	33	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	46	69	20	30	1	1	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	26	39	32	48	4	6	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	25	37	39	58	0	0	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	40	60	24	36	3	4	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	31	46	30	45	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	26	39	40	60	1	1	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	16	24	38	57	7	10	1	1
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	21	31	25	37	4	6	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	34	30	45	6	9	1	1
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	29	43	26	39	6	9	1	1
Q12 The school is well led and managed	40	60	24	36	2	3	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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



27 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Smeeth Community Primary School, Ashford TN25 6RX

Thank you all for the warm welcome and the help you gave to the inspectors who recently visited your school. I am writing to tell you about what we found.

- Yours is a good school which gives you a broad and balanced education. You told us that you particularly enjoy the wide range of special events and sports activities.
- You make good progress in lots of different subjects, including reading, mathematics and art.
- Teachers give you a good variety of things to do in lessons. You know what to do to improve your work but not always how well you are doing or what levels you should be aiming for.
- You behave well in lessons and around the school. You get on well with one another as well as with your teachers. Your attendance is good and you are punctual to lessons. Well done!
- You say you feel safe in school and are not very worried about bullying because it is rare and dealt with well by the school.
- You have good opportunities to learn about different ways of life in this and other countries.
- The school prepares you well for the next stage of your education, and for working life.

The headteacher, staff and governing body are all working hard to make the school even better. To help them to do this, we have asked them to do the following things:

- help you to improve your writing skills by giving you more chances to write about a range of different things
- make sure you know exactly how well you are doing in your work and what targets you should be aiming for
- give teachers more opportunities to share their best ideas.

Yours sincerely

Robin Gaff
Lead inspector

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