

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118631
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	379652
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Shortland
Headteacher	Vincent Hampton
Date of previous school inspection	25 March 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 10 lessons and three teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding policies and procedures. Questionnaires from 23 parents and carers were received and analysed along with those from pupils and staff.

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

- The effectiveness of the school's work to improve attendance.
- The level of challenge in lessons, including through marking and feedback, to determine the quality of teaching and how well pupils know how to improve their work.
- The impact of the curriculum in meeting pupils' learning needs as well their interests.
- How well the school is working to improve mathematics so that attainment and progress at least match those in English.
- The impact of the work of leaders and managers in securing school improvement and capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Ulcombe is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the next largest group are of Gypsy/Roma heritage. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has dropped from 72. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties. Provision is made for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. The school has national Healthy Schools status and an Eco School award.

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

3

Main findings

Ulcombe is a satisfactory school. Pupils enjoy school, behave well and contribute much to the community. They are enthusiastic learners who strive to do well. Good, trusting and respectful relationships between staff and pupils and good care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe, well cared for and confident to turn to adults for support should the need arise. One parent wrote, 'This school is more like a large family unit, friendly, caring and wanting the best.' Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy, which is reflected in the school's national Healthy Schools status. The school engages well with parents and carers. Good partnerships with other schools, the church, a range of organisations and external agencies make a significant contribution to pupils' well-being and learning opportunities.

Overall, the pattern of attainment is average and achievement is satisfactory. Progress is satisfactory and although an increasing number of pupils are now making good progress, this has yet to have an impact on the Year 6 national test results. In the 2011 national tests, the majority reached the expected Level 4 in mathematics and the large majority did so in English. In mathematics, pupils' problem solving and investigative skills held some back, particularly the more-able pupils. Increased use of a range of resources for practical activities is helping to accelerate pupils' progress. Pupils' work and the school's tracking data indicate that more of the current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve the higher level (Level 5) in 2012 and narrow the gap between English and mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory with elements of good teaching in many lessons, which is helping to improve the rate of pupils' progress. There is, however, a lack of consistency in the pace of learning and the level of challenge in lessons. On occasion the learning objectives of lessons do not clearly relate to the subject skills to be taught. There are some good examples of marking and feedback that give pupils good information on how to improve. However, pupils do not always have a clear idea of their targets for learning and how to achieve them or evaluate their own progress.

There is a good programme of clubs that enrich the curriculum, which is satisfactory overall. The school works hard to plan a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils in mixed-aged classes. The headteacher has correctly identified the need to evaluate its impact to ensure that there is a clear progression in skills and that it is meeting pupils' learning needs as well as their interests and providing enough opportunities

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for pupils to apply their skills, particularly in writing, across a range of subjects.

Changes within this small staff team have meant that the school has not been able to move forward as rapidly as it wished in tackling the issues identified at the previous inspection. However, it is now on track and improving and has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement building on the vision, ambition and good leadership of the headteacher. Staff are committed to ensuring that every pupil reaches their academic and personal potential. The school's self-evaluation is robust, painting a clear and accurate picture of its strengths and areas for further development and is effectively used to plan for the future and to deploy resources and staff.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better, matching that of the best seen
 - increasing the pace of learning and maintaining a high level of challenge to ensure all pupils make good progress
 - ensuring that there are well-defined learning objectives so that pupils are very clear about the purpose of their learning
 - ensuring pupils know their learning targets and how to improve their work to achieve them.
- Strengthen the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that it maximises pupils' opportunities to apply skills, particularly in writing, across a range of subjects
 - fully embedding the school's creative curriculum, monitoring and evaluating its impact on learning, and as a result taking appropriate action to ensure it fully meets all learners' needs.

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

Children start school with attainment that is generally at the expected levels for their age and overall outcomes for pupils are satisfactory by the time they leave. Attainment does fluctuate due to the often very small number of pupils taking the Year 6 national tests but the three-year trend is average overall in English and mathematics. Pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others because effective systems are in place to identify individual needs and they are supported well on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. There is no discernible pattern of difference in the progress made by boys and girls.

Pupils' positive attitudes and determination to succeed as well as their good

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interaction with each other make an important contribution to their learning. For example, in an English lesson, pupils worked well together to share and record ideas about road safety and listened well to each group’s ideas in the end of session discussion. However, the learning objective did not have a clear literacy focus and so pupils were unsure about the purpose of their learning. In a mathematics lesson using the four operations on whole numbers and decimals, older pupils made satisfactory progress. The pace of learning was too slow because after a lively start, too long was spent on the opening activity at the expense of pupils’ independent learning.

Pupils enjoy their responsibilities and leadership roles around the school and take them seriously. They know their views are valued and they make a good contribution to the school. Pupils take part in fund raising events for a range of charities and causes. The school council is particularly proud of its work to raise funds for a shelter in the playground and its continuing work on environmental and sustainability issues which resulted in the Eco School award. The school’s caring ethos makes a significant contribution to pupils’ good spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils’ awareness of other cultures beyond those within their immediate community is satisfactory. Their basic skills and their good personal skills prepare them adequately for the next stage of their education.

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	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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan activities well so that the different year groups in their classes cover the appropriate curriculum for their ages. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and make learning interesting although they do not always provide sufficient challenge for pupils, particularly the more able. Teachers have good strategies for ensuring that all pupils are engaged in lessons and are prepared to respond to teachers' questions. Parents and carers, as well as pupils, appreciate the range of clubs on offer. One parent wrote, 'After-school activities are varied and popular. Both my children love the school and I am very happy that their early education has been in such an environment.' Curriculum visits are planned to link to the whole school topic and pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about a visit earlier in the week of the inspection to London Underground's staff training facility and to use various modes of transport around the capital. A group of pupils agreed with one who said, 'It was so exciting to be there and we learnt lots of things.'

Effective, well-targeted care, guidance and support for pupils and their families ensure that pupils, particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are included in all aspects of school life, integrate well and make at least satisfactory progress relative to their starting points. Transition procedures into the school, through the key stages and into Year 7, are effective. The percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees is much higher than found nationally. This is because a considerable proportion of pupils have dual registration and the headteacher and governing body, as part of the school's inclusive ethos, have taken the decision to retain these pupils on its roll so that pupils can return to school with no gap in their education. The school strives relentlessly to promote the regular attendance of all pupils and overall, attendance for the majority of pupils has improved since the last inspection and is now average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The inclusive ethos of the school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and develop without fear of discrimination. One pupil from the school's Traveller community who has experience of several schools said, 'This school is the best because they treat you well and with respect for the things that are important to us.' As a result, all pupils achieve satisfactorily. Safeguarding procedures meet

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requirements and provide pupils with a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through formal observation, pupil progress meetings and regular checks on pupils’ work, and where weaknesses are observed, effective support is provided. The governing body has a clear view of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and has worked with staff on school development planning. The school benefits from its members’ professional expertise and it has played an active role in the plans to extend the school’s facilities. Communication with parents and carers is good through a range of channels and they are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school, for example, parents and carers run a well-attended after-school gardening club.

Leaders have developed the school as a cohesive community which values the culture and beliefs of its own and local community. Their evaluation has identified the need to reach out beyond it at national and international levels to widen pupils’ horizons. There is a strong sense of shared responsibility and commitment among staff who are motivated by the increased levels of participation in monitoring, evaluation and school improvement. Inspection findings endorse the comment made by one member of staff who wrote, ‘Significant steps forward have been made by governors and subject leaders in their understanding of school improvement and their part to play in it. This needs to become embedded practice now.’

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Small numbers in Reception make it difficult to compare the year-on-year outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children usually join the school with skills and knowledge that are generally at the expected levels for their age although this varies from year to year and is reflected in their varied starting points in Year 1.

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Overall, they make satisfactory progress. Children settle quickly into the routines of the school day, are happy and enjoy learning. Children’s social development is a strength, which is a benefit of learning with Year 1 pupils. There is a good outdoor space, with a covered area, which is well-equipped and the school has correctly identified the need to increase their use of it as a learning environment. Good attention is paid to children’s welfare and positive, trusting relationships between staff and children ensure that children feel safe and secure at all times. Children understand the need to keep themselves safe and healthy. They explained that they wash their hands before eating and after going to the toilet ‘to wash all the dirty germs away that make you sick’. Satisfactory teaching and adult involvement in play to support learning ensure that children’s needs are met satisfactorily although opportunities are sometimes missed to promote children’s early writing skills during role-play activities. There is a satisfactory balance of activities directed by adults and those where children can make their own choices, thus supporting their growing independence. Children make a good contribution to the smooth running of the day by registering their own names on arrival, hanging up their coats and storing their book bags and water bottles. There is thorough ongoing assessment from observational notes linked to all areas of learning. Information about the topic is shared with parents and carers on a weekly basis in ‘learning journey’ books, which enable milestones in children’s learning at home and at school to be shared.

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

A larger-than-average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of these, most were positive about all aspects of the school’s work and all parents and carers agreed that the school helps children to have a healthy lifestyle. The main concerns from a very small minority were whether children were making enough progress and meeting children’s particular needs. Inspectors found that the school meets children’s needs well and progress is satisfactory although improving.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ulcombe 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	74	4	17	0	0	1	4
The school keeps my child safe	17	74	5	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	14	61	7	30	0	0	2	9
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	70	4	17	0	0	3	13
The teaching is good at this school	14	61	6	26	2	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	11	48	9	39	0	0	2	9
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	43	13	57	0	0	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)	9	39	10	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	11	48	9	39	0	0	3	13
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	43	12	52	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	39	11	48	0	0	2	9
The school is led and managed effectively	15	65	5	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	17	74	5	22	1	4	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 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.



28 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ulcombe Church of England Primary School, Maidstone ME17 1DU

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school and for talking to us about your work. You are very polite and friendly and we really appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school. Ulcombe is a satisfactory school, which means that some things are good and some things need to be better.

These are some of the things that stood out about Ulcombe.

- All of you who completed the questionnaire felt that adults in the school care about you and we agree because they provide you with good care, guidance and support.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other in lessons and in the playground. Well done for this; it is so important and means your school is a happy place to be and you know how to stay safe and healthy.
- You do a good job in helping the school run smoothly and enjoy your responsibilities.

By the time you leave the school your attainment is average. We think this should be better and have asked the school to do the following things.

- Make sure all of your lessons are good so that you can learn new things more quickly and make better progress and you are clear about what you are learning.
- Make sure you know your learning targets and how to improve your work to achieve them.
- Provide you with more opportunities to use your skills, especially in writing, in different subjects.
- Check that the curriculum is helping you learn as well as you can, as well as enjoying your lessons.

You can all help by always working hard and doing your very best.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Lead inspector

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