

Aldington Primary School

Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford, TN25 7EE

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Aldington is a very welcoming school where pupils are keen to learn and this helps them to make good progress. Their positive attitudes to learning prepare them well for their next schools.
- The drive and vision of the school's leaders and governors have ensured that teaching and achievement are good and improving. Teachers have high expectations and aim to bring out the best in pupils.
- The Reception class gives pupils a good start because activities are carefully planned to develop their skills.
- Most pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics, reaching standards that are above the national average by the end of Year 6.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. As a result, they are courteous and behave well around school.
- Pupils feel very safe; they like their teachers and are confident that adults will be quick to respond to their needs.
- Attendance is well above the national average and has improved.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers strongly support the school and appreciate what it offers their children.
- The school values its strong relationship with the local community and its place at the heart of the village.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers provide pupils with too few opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners.
- In 2013 pupils did not do as well at the end of Year 6 in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling as they did in reading and mathematics.
- The variable quality of marking means that it does not always give pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to move their learning on.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all seven classes. He visited significant parts of 9 lessons involving all teachers, three jointly with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. The inspector listened to a sample of pupils read. He also attended a whole-school assembly.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, a range of staff, including senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and checked pupils' work, progress information, evaluation and development documents, safeguarding information, records relating to attendance, and governing body minutes.
- The inspector took account of 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 12 questionnaires completed by staff during the inspection. Other parental views were sought from a small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Steven Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school serving its local community.
- Most pupils are of White British origin although there are few from other backgrounds including some of Romany and Gypsy heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils, in this school, who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There is a nursery on the school site. This is managed by a private provider and was not included in this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in order to speed up pupils' progress by making sure that:
 - the work set gives pupils more opportunities to be actively involved in managing their own learning, for example, through assessing their own and each other's work
 - marking always gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to move their learning on and pupils are given the opportunity to respond to the guidance.
- Raise achievement more rapidly in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling by making sure that pupils are provided with more opportunities to engage in extended writing through topics that are matched to their interests and aspirations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school in Reception with knowledge, skills and understanding broadly in line with expectations for their age. They make exceptional progress in their personal and social development, learning to be independent as well as to cooperate, share and play well with other children.
- Parents and carers say their children make good progress. Pupils' achievement in mathematics and reading, including those who speak English as an additional language, those supported by the pupil premium and those of Romany or Gypsy heritage, is good and improving across the school.
- More-able pupils also do well and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in the Key Stage 2 tests is above the national average.
- In mathematics, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium at the end of Year 6 is similar to that of other pupils. In reading they are about a term behind their peers but in writing they are a year behind them. School information shows that this gap is now much narrower for pupils currently in the school because of the effective support in place.
- Pupils now have more opportunities to link reading and writing activities and this is accelerating their progress but there are too few opportunities for them to practise their extended writing.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) is having a positive impact on pupils' early reading and writing skills. Pupils are developing confidence at a young age because of their understanding of how to attempt unfamiliar words. Pupils say that they have the opportunity to read at home and that they enjoy reading.
- In 2013, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action plus made strong progress and achieved well but a few pupils supported by school action did not make enough progress. Teaching assistants are becoming very adept at providing the right balance of support to pupils currently in the school and this is now enabling them to make better progress and achieve well.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in the 2013 national tests was above average overall but higher in mathematics and reading than in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling. All pupils had made steady progress in writing, from their starting points but it was not as marked as it was in reading and mathematics. School information shows that the attainment of pupils currently in the school is rising in writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall and pupils say teachers make learning fun. The school's focus on checking on the quality of teaching has helped to move it to good levels. However, not all teaching is at the level of the very best and the school has strategies in place to address the weaker teaching.
- The stronger teaching ensures that learning activities are well matched to pupils' needs and effective questioning is used well in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning.
- The good teaching seen in the Forest School enabled pupils to develop a wide range of social, physical and creative skills making an anti-bullying wand. They learnt how to lash willow twigs together, tie a reef knot and plait the twigs to make the wand. All the pupils spoken to said how much they 'love the Forest School' and could explain how their outdoor learning linked to their indoor learning on the different types of bullying.
- School information for those who may need extra help was not robust enough in the past but the school has improved it significantly, so pupils currently in the school who are supported by school action receive the help they need to make rapid progress more quickly.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but sometimes their feedback on how well pupils are doing does not provide clear guidance on how to move learning on. Pupils are not always given the

time to act on the guidance.

- Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately in lessons, for example through effective questioning and use the feedback from the pupils to adjust their approach and ensure the activities continue to match the pupils' abilities. Pupils are fully aware that they are not all doing the work set in the same way. They understand the reasons for this and recognise that it is to help them whatever their abilities. As one pupil said, 'It doesn't matter, it's about your personal best.'
- Pair and group work are regular features of many lessons, where pupils discuss their work with their talk partners to increase their understanding. Teachers make learning interesting and active but opportunities to provide pupils with the information they need to develop the skills to learn independently, for example through feedback in marking on what they need to do to move their learning on, are too often missed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school has very high expectations for behaviour and pupils rise to them. Pupils' consistently display a love of learning which has a strong impact on the progress they make. Pupils know how they should behave but recognise that, occasionally, some do not meet the school's high standards. Nevertheless, they are confident that the school will deal with such matters and are aware of the various sanctions, for example being given a warning.
- Behaviour is very well managed by all adults who apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. Pupils behave well within lessons, especially those which engage their attention.
- Pupils, parents and carers agree that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils say that they like school because it is happy and friendly. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying and had only recently reviewed information about cyber bullying and how to protect themselves online. They struggle to recall any incidents of bullying but confirm that, should they occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils value the opportunities the school provides to take on responsibilities and say that older children, in particular, can take on a range of roles, such as Year 6 pupils being a buddy in the Reception class, or being a milk monitor or House Captain. They say they are listened to, as matters discussed by the school council have influenced decisions taken, such as the purchase of a new interactive whiteboard.
- A particular strength of the school is its induction programme for children who join during the year. One older pupil said, 'I feel like I have been here longer', when reflecting on how welcome he was made to feel when he joined the school. New pupils are allocated a buddy and provided with a guide of essential information written by the pupils. The school also takes steps to obtain information from the previous school to secure continuity of progression in their learning.
- Pupils value the rewards system and feel that their successes are recognised by the school. They told the inspector about personal rewards, for example house points and class rewards, such as 'well done vouchers' and the big star that the class gets to keep for a week.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school because, as one said, 'It's fun to learn', and this is reflected in their attendance which has improved since the last inspection, but some express some concern that their learning is occasionally disrupted by a small minority of pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive and ambition of the headteacher, supported by governors and other leaders, has ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good and continue to improve.
- The overwhelming majority of parents, carers and staff are very positive about the leadership of the headteacher and hold her in high regard.
- The school has a very accurate view of its work that is used well to inform school improvement planning. Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what it

needs to do to improve. School information on pupils' progress is analysed regularly and used well in pupil progress meetings to identify those pupils who may be in danger of falling behind.

- The headteacher and staff benefit from being in a strong partnership of schools which provides opportunities for them to share good practice and learn from each other. This approach is strengthening the school's capacity to improve.
- School monitoring over time reflects inspection evidence that teaching is good, although leaders are very clear that there is more to do to move it to outstanding, such as providing pupils with the feedback they need to manage their own learning independent of the teacher.
- The broad and balanced subjects and topics are being linked to develop an innovative skills-based curriculum. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to practise their numeracy skills through problem solving and their literacy skills through activities such as writing the school opera, undertaken by Years 5 and 6 pupils.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities such as residential trips, school journeys and African drumming.
- The school has clear plans to use the additional sports funding to increase participation in sport. It is using the funding to employ qualified coaches who are modelling effective practice by working with pupils alongside their teachers to increase their subject knowledge and confidence in physical education whilst effectively developing pupils' skills.
- There is a focus on ensuring equal opportunities throughout the school. There is no discrimination. However, variations in teaching mean that pupils do not all have the same opportunity to make outstanding progress.
- The local authority has evaluated the school correctly as in need of only 'light-touch' support and provides appropriate support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors set a clear vision for the school which staff contribute to on 'vision day'. The Chair of the Governing Body provides strong leadership and enables all governors to contribute to the life of the school; as a result pupils know who governors are. Minutes of governors' meetings record the robust questions asked to challenge the school to improve. This has been instrumental in bringing about, and supporting, the improvements to the school since the last inspection. Governors bring a thorough knowledge of financial matters to their work. They have access to high-quality training and records show they take full advantage of it. The induction of new governors is undertaken by more experienced colleagues. Governors are clear about teachers' performance management and how it is linked to the quality of teaching, which they monitor through reports from the headteacher. They monitor how the pupil premium grant is spent and are very clear about the impact it is having on pupils' progress in mathematics and reading. Governors know that they do not monitor the impact on writing rigorously enough and have taken steps to rectify this. Governors ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118365
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	427337

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	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Meadway
Headteacher	Sandra MacCourt
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 May 2011
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