

Smeeth Community Primary School

Caroland Close, Smeeth, Ashford, TN25 6RX

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Smeeth is a happy, friendly school with a family atmosphere and a hardworking school community.
- The headteacher has high expectations for pupils and staff. Supported by governors and senior leaders, she has, in a short amount of time, ensured that teaching and achievement have improved.
- Pupils achieve well and reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- All groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils.
- Teaching is good. There is a culture of support and this helps teachers continually improve.
- Children get a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress and are well prepared to continue learning in Year 1.
- Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils conduct themselves well; they are polite and respectful and behave well.
- Pupils and their parents agree that the school keeps children safe and secure and that they are well looked after.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and pleased with the education their children receive.
- Governors know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They share the commitment of the headteacher to improve the school. They review their own effectiveness to ensure they can hold the school to account for its performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet typically outstanding.
- On occasion, pupils are not sufficiently involved in their lessons and so lose their concentration and do not always make the progress they are capable of.
- The most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and do not always have time to complete more demanding work in order to make faster progress.
- Teaching assistants do not always have the skills or expertise to be even more effective in supporting pupils' learning

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, most of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- In addition, the inspector talked to pupils about their work, looked at their books and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff with key leadership responsibilities. Discussions were held with pupils, governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspector looked at 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own survey of parents conducted in October 2014. The inspector also took account of nine questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- In 2014 the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Children attend the Early Years Foundation Stage on a full-time basis in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- The headteacher took up her post in April 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by improving teaching so that it is typically outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations for pupils' involvement and behaviour in their lessons so that they do not lose their concentration and achieve as well as they can
 - the most able pupils are challenged and have time to complete more demanding work and so make faster progress
 - all teaching assistants have the skills and expertise to be even more effective in supporting pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has created a strong team of staff who share her ambition and drive to provide the best possible learning and experiences for pupils. In a short space of time she has secured the confidence of parents and staff, and morale is high.
- Expectations for staff are high and clearly communicated so that all teachers know they are accountable for their pupils' progress. Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching ensure that any weaknesses are quickly identified, effective action is taken and rapid improvement is expected.
- Judgements on teachers' performance and pay awards are linked to the national Teachers' Standards and pupils' progress. These inform appropriate further training for the staff as a whole and for individuals.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement by keeping a close check on what is working well and what aspects need further development. Leaders are active in collaborating with other schools to share good practice and support further training for staff.
- The headteacher, supported by governors and senior leaders, has taken rapid action and made significant improvements in important aspects of the school's work such as the quality of teaching, behaviour and pupils' achievement.
- There is a happy atmosphere in the school and a hardworking school community. Staff are good role models and effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all aspects of school life. Pupils show an understanding and tolerance of difference amongst various groups.
- There is no discrimination and the school is committed to equal opportunities for all pupils. This is demonstrated in the overall good progress made by all groups, although leaders know there is more to do to ensure that some of the most able pupils make more rapid progress. Leaders ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils have access to all learning opportunities and are supported well.
- Well-planned and interesting topics link learning well across different subjects. The curriculum and the school's values and beliefs foster good relations, tolerance and understanding of diversity in all its forms. Pupils learn without fear of any form of discrimination. In abiding by the rules of the school community pupils understand that there are rules and democratic values in the wider community. These aspects prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils spoke with enthusiasm of the 'enrichment afternoons' where they have opportunities to work with pupils of different ages, develop new interests and learn new skills, for example, flower arranging, cooking, puppet making and origami. A range of clubs, visits and visitors to school enhance pupils' learning and experiences.
- The school has close, productive partnerships with many other schools which enable pupils to participate in joint sporting events, music festivals and art and literacy projects so their experiences are not limited by belonging to a small school.
- The school is an important part of the local village community. Pupils go out into the community and the community supports the work of the school. For example, a local artist works with pupils to develop their watercolour skills.
- Middle managers and subject leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and areas of responsibility. They have recently become much more involved in analysing data to check on pupils' progress as well as looking at pupils' progress in books and observing learning in lessons. Leaders attend appropriate training to keep up to date with recent developments and have been influential in ensuring that the requirements of the new National Curriculum and special educational needs are met. Their links with colleagues from other schools help the accuracy and consistency of measuring pupils' progress and attainment.
- The additional funding for primary sports has been used effectively to enhance the already strong provision in the school. Additional clubs have increased pupils' participation in a range of sports. Membership of the Ashford District Primary Sports Association has enabled the school to increase its participation in local and district competitions and tournaments. Specialist coaches work with teachers and pupils to extend and improve skills and benefit pupils' healthy lifestyles and well-being.
- Additional funding is used effectively to ensure that the very small number of disadvantaged pupils make similar good progress to others in the school and disadvantaged pupils nationally. For example, funding is used to provide extra support for individuals or small groups, counselling and play therapy to meet emotional needs and subsidising trips and other activities so that all pupils are included.
- Parents are positive about all aspects of the school's work. Leaders inform parents about how they can

work with the school to support their children's learning.

- The safeguarding arrangements are well established and known and implemented by all staff.
- The local authority supports the school well. It has been particularly active in supporting improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and phonics teaching. It has confidence in the new headteacher and feels that much has been accomplished in a short space of time, leading to improvements in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well, its strengths and weaknesses and are committed to its improvement. They are well informed by the headteacher and by their own monitoring about the school's performance and how it compares to other schools' nationally. Governors attend meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders to discuss pupils' progress and question leaders if progress falls below what is expected.
 - The governing body has reviewed its skills. Governors feel the new headteacher has helped to increase their involvement and the challenge they provide to the school. They are aware that they need to sustain and further increase their effectiveness in holding the school to account for its performance with robust challenge to bring about more rapid improvement.
 - They have a good awareness of the use and impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and the primary sports funding.
 - They know about the quality of teaching, understand how underperformance is tackled and ensure that pay rewards and promotions are linked to pupils' progress.
 - Governors are working with a group of local schools for training and sharing best practice to ensure there is rigour in their strategic work.
 - The governing body ensures that all statutory duties are met, including safeguarding requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to learning and work hard, which helps them make good progress. Pupils are friendly, confident and polite to each other and adults. They conduct themselves well around the school and in the playground. They appreciate the benefits of belonging to a small school community. Typical comments were, 'We like the fact that we all know each other, we are all friends and look after each other.'
- Pupils were involved in creating the relatively new behaviour policy and, as a result, clearly understand the expectations, rewards and sanctions. They say that this has helped to improve behaviour. School records show that incidents of inappropriate behaviour have reduced over time and that the behaviour of a small number of pupils who find it harder to manage their own behaviour has improved.
- Most parents and all staff who responded to the questionnaires agree that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils take pride in their school and enjoy the responsibilities they are given. Pupils in the 'eco club' were very enthusiastic about planting seeds, clearing leaves and collecting litter. They explained their aim was 'to keep the school looking neat and attractive'.
- On a few occasions, some pupils' behaviour in lessons can slip a little. This is because teaching does not always fully engage all pupils and so some become distracted, do not focus on what the teacher is saying and lose their focus on learning.
- Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual in arriving at school.
- The well-attended breakfast club provides a safe and healthy start to the school day.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school. All parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils say they are not aware of any bullying in school. They are very confident, however, that if any incidents should arise, teachers would sort them out straight away.
- The school effectively helps pupils understand that bullying can take different forms, including cyber-bullying and prejudiced-based bullying. Pupils agreed with one who said, 'We know it's not okay to make fun or be unkind to people who are different.' They have a good awareness that using certain vocabulary can be offensive to others, including the use of homophobic language.
- Pupils demonstrated that they know how to keep themselves safe when online, using computers or mobile phones. They said that they learned a lot from a visit by 'the e-safety lady' and that 'we know we're not allowed to be on Facebook'.

- Pupils have a clear understanding of potential unsafe situations and are very aware of how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school.
- The school meets all of the required safeguarding requirements.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and helps pupils to make good progress. There are good, trusting relationships between pupils and staff. As a result, pupils enjoy learning, want to do well and are encouraged to take pride in their achievements. The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are taught well.
- Pupils' books, teachers' records and pupils' current work show that good teaching is typical and pupils learn well.
- Teachers and pupils make good use of technology and purposeful classroom displays to effectively support teaching and learning. For example, pupils use 'working walls' to help them use correct grammar and vocabulary and create interesting, imaginative pieces of writing.
- Teachers are skilled at using questions to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. This is particularly effective in the teaching of reading and is promoting pupils' good progress.
- There are some good examples of teachers' marking. Teachers praise pupils' achievements and also give clear pointers so that pupils know how to improve. Pupils know their targets for learning. In some classes they have many opportunities to check on their own and others' learning, which promotes better progress.
- Teachers often give pupils opportunities to share their work and ideas with the class and discuss what is successful. For example, pupils were writing a diary entry as Guy Fawkes as part of their topic on London. At various points, they stopped to reflect on others' work. As a result, pupils were able to improve their own work and made good progress in their writing.
- Writing skills are taught through pupils' work in different subjects, not just in English lessons, so they are always clear about the purpose of their writing. This has helped to raise achievement in writing, which is now a strength. This was an issue to improve in the previous inspection report.
- Mathematics teaching is now more consistent across the school and the impact of this is seen in the considerable improvement in attainment in 2014 from the previous year.
- Teachers usually plan work to meet the needs of all abilities and this is particularly effective for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Most able pupils often have to complete the same work as others first before moving on to the harder work. This means they sometimes do not have enough time to complete the more challenging work and therefore do not always make the more rapid progress they are capable of to attain at the higher levels.
- Teaching assistants work with pupils of different abilities and often make a good contribution to pupils' learning. However, sometimes they do not have the skills to move pupils on in their learning and sometimes they do things for the pupils that pupils are capable of doing for themselves, which hinders pupils' learning.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The relatively small numbers in the year groups mean that published information on attainment needs to be interpreted with caution. For example, in 2014, one pupil in Year 6 represented approximately 6% of the group.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. In 2014, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was above average. These results were an improvement from 2013 and show an improving trend over the past three years. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected level by the end of Year 2 was above average in reading and mathematics, although they did less well in writing.
- The proportion of most able pupils achieving the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was below average in mathematics and reading. Fewer pupils than found nationally reached the higher level in writing by the end of Year 2 but by the end of Year 6, more pupils than found nationally reached the higher levels. This is because the school has focused on pupils' writing achievement and pupils made outstanding progress from their starting points at the end of Year 2.
- In the 2014 phonics (sounds that letters make) check for Year 1 pupils, the proportion that reached the required level was below that found nationally. The school took this very seriously and looked carefully into the reasons why. Additional support was given to the pupils who had not achieved the expected level

so that by Year 2 they were up to speed in their phonics knowledge. The school reviewed its approach to phonics teaching, additional training was provided for staff and parents were provided with helpful information to support their children. The impact of this is seen in the good phonics skills of pupils currently in Year 1 and Year 2.

- By Year 6, most pupils read well. They use a range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words and correct themselves if they read aloud something that does not make sense. Leaders are working effectively to increase pupils' enjoyment and motivation to read for pleasure.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their varied starting points because their needs are well met.
- In 2014 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils by the end of Year 6 was around six months behind their classmates in reading, and around four months behind in mathematics. Their attainment was broadly similar to their classmates' in writing. Compared to disadvantage pupils nationally, their attainment was broadly similar. School records and pupils' work show that gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are small in all year groups.

The early years provision

is good

- Children's starting points are varied when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Overall, they are weaker in literacy, mathematics and their understanding of the world than in other areas.
- They make good progress from their starting points and most children reach at least the expected achievement by the end of the Reception year. This means they are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- In 2013 the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was above the national figure. In 2014 it was below. This was because there were a high number of children, around one third of the group, who had special educational needs. They made similar good progress to others but did not always achieve as highly as their classmates.
- Children make good progress because activities effectively capture their interest and imagination and teaching is good. There are good, trusting relationships between adults and children and adults know the children well.
- There are effective systems for checking and recording children's achievements. This information is used well to plan the next steps in learning.
- Leaders have created stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas that effectively promote children's number and language skills. Plans are well underway to further develop the classroom and outdoor space and introduce new resources.
- Children come to school happily and quickly settle into the routines and work of the day. Behaviour is good. They play and work together well, sharing resources and cooperating with each other. They are kept safe and secure at all times.
- The relatively new leader is supported well by the headteacher and local authority consultants to constantly improve the provision. As a result, the Early Years Foundation Stage is effectively led and managed and there is a good awareness of what is working well and what areas need further improvement.

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	118381
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	444003

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	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Mackay
Headteacher	Lisa Flack
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2011
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Fax number	01303 813128
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