

Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114496
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311625
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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 on roll	
School	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Gillian Mills
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 0001
School address	Sheepsetting Lane Cross-in-Hand Heathfield TN21 0XG
Telephone number	01435 862941
Fax number	01435 862464

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether the achievement of pupils is good throughout the school and across a number of subjects, establishing whether the right actions are being taken at all levels of leadership to ensure the continuing success of the school. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, interviews with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, full senior leadership team and governors, and discussions with pupils and staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school serving an area on the outskirts of the town. Pupils start school with attainment that is broadly similar to that expected for their age. Building works will shortly be starting to provide extended nursery facilities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding and highly effective school. It is providing pupils with the right opportunities to ensure that they are very well prepared for their future lives. The accurate analysis of performance by the school's leadership and management and the very highly effective measures for improvement have been at the heart of the school's development. The extremely clear direction provided by the experienced headteacher is particularly well supported by the deputy headteacher, senior staff and governing body. Between them, they have produced a very well constructed and astute school improvement plan that concentrates on a small but highly focused number of priorities. The school sets very high expectations for itself. As the headteacher said, 'We are always trying to find ways of doing something better.' Nevertheless, the very consistent improvement that has been made over a number of years and all of the many positive outcomes for the pupils indicate an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

From a strong position at the time of the last inspection, the school has further improved the achievement of pupils and successfully tackled those areas that were less strong. For example, assessment is now much better used and a variety of approaches to teaching have been developed so that all lessons are at least good and a high number are outstanding. There are very many common strengths, such as the planning, organisation and variety of approaches to make teaching lively. As a result, pupils make continuously high levels of academic progress from the time they enter the Reception class to when they leave in Year 6. The innovative use of different activities has been very effective in driving up achievement, particularly in writing and for groups of pupils who have not been making the expected progress. For instance, data from assessment indicated that, over time, pupils in Year 5 were not doing as well as they could. This has been fully resolved by carefully readjusting activities in lessons so that they offer more opportunities for pupils to think independently and apply what they have already learnt. However, this successful approach is not consistent across all subjects.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, many remarking how well their children are doing and how well rounded they feel their children's education is. This is evident in the highly innovative and varied activities that take place, the very extensive use of experts, visits and practical work, often involving parents' participation. For example, a day was recently organised that involved pupils and parents in writing stories and helping one another to understand the use of language better.

Pupils' excitement in learning can be seen in the way that they become highly involved in activities, guided by extremely skilful teaching. Pupils work particularly well with each other, showing high levels of maturity. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils are a delight to be with. They take turns and are prepared to do that bit extra to make sure they derive the most from their schooling. For instance, the questions pupils asked in a role play about the Tudors demonstrated the intensive research they had done and how well they used what they already knew about this period in history. Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to stay safe and healthy. They clearly understand how to deflect any potential conflict and many have used these skills to help in the playground. Even the youngest pupils are beginning to learn how to be healthy, explaining how they needed to clean their vegetables before putting them in the soup they were preparing. Pupils are also very closely involved with the local and the wider communities. Each class supports the education of a child in Ghana, keeping in regular contact through letters and photographs. Teachers from this school have visited Ghana and

have been able to provide first hand evidence of the results of the pupils' help. From this, everybody has learnt valuable lessons about different cultures.

The very many positive features of the school were summed up succinctly during one discussion with some pupils who said, 'This is a really good school - one of the best - case closed!'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an extremely good start to their school life. By the time they leave the Reception classes, they have the skills they will need to make outstanding progress, not only in the basic areas of language and mathematics but also in their physical, social and creative development. Through the consistently excellent teaching, activities are aimed at providing a well balanced range of learning. For example, there are times of the day when staff direct what is to be learnt while, at others, children have play activities where they can make the choices about what to do. The excellent leadership of the Foundation Stage makes sure that there is a continuing appraisal of what works best for each individual and a thorough analysis of the children's progress. This helps guide the very appropriate support quickly and effectively. Parents are particularly impressed with the very wide range of information that they are given, both about their children's progress and also about what they can do to help them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop high standards throughout all subjects by improving pupils' independence through more opportunities for them to think for themselves and apply the knowledge that they have previously learnt.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cross-in-Hand C of E Primary School, Heathfield TN21 0XG

Thank you for making me so welcome during my recent visit. I very much enjoyed talking to so many of you and seeing what you were doing in your lessons. As I promised some of you, the main points of my report are included below.

- You told me quite clearly that you thought your school was great. I agree, so you will not be surprised to know that I have said that it is outstanding. This is because you all make good progress from one year to the next and leave the school with good standards.
- You all behave extremely well and are excited about learning. I was very impressed with the way that you all get on so well with each other. You are a credit to your parents and carers.
- Your teachers know just what to do to make lessons exciting. I can see from all the photographs and reports that there is so much to do – I wonder how you fit it all in.
- You are also helping to make your school better by suggesting ways that it can be improved. You need to continue to do this because the things you are suggesting are making a difference.
- Your headteacher, along with all the staff, has the right plans to make things even better. They are going to try and give you even more opportunities to think for yourselves because you are quite capable of doing so. This will help prepare you more for when you move onto your next school.

Finally, I wish you all success for the future. Continue to try your hardest and make sure you give everybody the support that you can.

Best wishes

David Collard (Lead inspector)

Annex B

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