

Wittersham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 118740 |
| Local Authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 313072 |
| Inspection date | 2 October 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Susan Orpin |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 110 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 15 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Alison Short |
| Headteacher | Judith Thornton |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 April 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | The Street Wittersham Tenterden TN30 7EA |
| Telephone number | 01797 270329 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection date | 2 October 2008 |
| Inspection number | 313072 |

Fax number

01797 270259

Age group 4-11

Inspection date 2 October 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wittersham is a small village primary school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average, most of these being moderate in degree. Many pupils have left, or joined the school after the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school has gained the Active Mark Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, so by the time they leave, most reach broadly average standards. The most recent results improved, particularly in writing, demonstrating the school's success in making writing activities more interesting. Pupils also make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well, have a good awareness of right and wrong and care for each other. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They work well together and enjoy coming to school. Pupils readily undertake responsibilities, although in some lessons, they are too reliant on the teacher, so do not think for themselves.

Children in the EYFS make satisfactory progress and are provided with a sound beginning to their time in school. Teachers plan interesting activities and together with other staff provide a wide variety of stimulating topics for pupils to learn and tasks for them to do. However, despite these good qualities, teaching is satisfactory because sometimes the work planned is too easy. This is especially the case for more able pupils, some of whom could be achieving higher standards on occasions. The good curriculum provides variety and is made relevant and enjoyable through the links teachers make between subjects. Pastoral care is good, as reflected in one pupil's comment, 'I feel safe because teachers listen to us.' Pupils feel valued and are helped to settle easily into school. Their care and guidance are satisfactory rather than good, because their academic guidance is less well developed, as pupils are not always clear about their targets or how to improve their work.

The school improvement plan accurately identifies areas that need development in order to improve standards. There has been good improvement in pupils' attendance and the curriculum, and some better progress in pupils' writing. The school has a clear idea of its strengths and weaknesses and there are clear action plans to help it move forward. Therefore, the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children enter the school, they are at levels expected for their age, although the personal, social and emotional development of most children is slightly lower. Induction arrangements are good and ensure that children settle quickly and easily, even though some of them have not attended a nursery or playgroup. Careful planning and a satisfactory range of activities ensure that pupils are keen to work on tasks and have access to all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. The caring and secure environment means children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. As a result of satisfactory teaching, the children make sound progress in the main so they broadly achieve the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception Year. The teacher provides an appropriate balance between activities that enable children to work independently and activities which are led by the staff. This ensures that pupils learn through work and play. The teacher and her assistant work together well. Phonics teaching has enabled children to make better progress in their language skills, especially writing. However, some activities provided do not sufficiently challenge the more able children,

so they do not always progress as well as they should. The leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers always plan tasks that match with the needs of all pupils, especially those who are more able, in order to raise standards.
- Improve the rigour of monitoring the work of the school.
- Improve the precision of the targets set for all pupils so they have a clear understanding about how to improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in English, mathematics and science in Years 2 and 6 are broadly average, reflecting the general picture over recent years. However, the most recent results in 2008 for Years 2 and 6 represent a significant improvement, appearing to be much better in all subjects. The pupils in these year groups were more able than usual, reflecting the differences that can occur between cohorts of pupils in a small school. There was particularly good improvement in Year 6 writing, reflecting the school's good efforts to improve it. However, these results continue to represent satisfactory achievement, given the higher starting points for these pupils. Standards in the current Years 2 and 6 are average and pupils generally make satisfactory progress through the school, with a slight improvement as they reach the final years. Pupils make good progress in ICT, as a result of the good use of the specialist suite and the technician's expertise. Pupils with learning difficulties also make satisfactory progress as their needs are met soundly in lessons and group activities. However, at times, more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident and readily express their views. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the wide range of activities offered to them. This is reflected in their above average attendance, which has improved very well since the last inspection. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils are caring, work well in groups and have a good knowledge of their own and other cultures. Pupils' behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school, although there are a few occasions when they become distracted because lessons are less interesting. Bullying is rare. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, shown by their safe practices and healthy attitudes and illustrated in their fruit snacks at playtime and regular consumption of water. Pupils contribute well to the local community, for example through their close links with the church, charitable fund raising and the very active and influential school council. Despite pupils' willingness to undertake responsibilities, in some lessons they are not well enough involved in taking responsibility for their learning. Although pupils work well together and achieve well in ICT, their slower progress in literacy and numeracy means that preparation for their future lives is satisfactory rather than good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In most lessons, teachers plan interesting activities and work in a positive and supportive way with their pupils. Teachers manage their pupils well. Relationships are generally positive and ensure pupils feel encouraged to do their best. Teaching assistants and the ICT technician are used well both in and out of classrooms, with a variety of different groupings that provide a wide range of stimulating activities. Generally the planning of lessons is good, providing tasks that are well matched to the abilities of pupils, particularly those who are lower ability. However, teaching is satisfactory rather than good because the work set for more able pupils is sometimes too easy for them. Also, very occasionally the pace of work is too slow, resulting in pupils becoming restless and losing concentration. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but there are missed opportunities to inform them about how they might improve more quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection. It now provides a stimulating variety of activities, so pupils enjoy school. The whole-school approach to planning for mixed age classes works well. Teachers make good links between subjects that help pupils understand and make learning more interesting. The programme of personal, social and health education, with a strong focus on social and emotional learning, makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The school provides a good range of physical education activities, including swimming, and benefits from the use of expertise through its close links with other schools. Pupils also enjoy the wide range of musical activities, such as learning to play electric guitars, and varied visitors to the school, such as theatre groups. Pupils learn ICT well through specific group lessons, but there are not always enough opportunities for pupils to use these skills to learn in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a caring and welcoming environment where pupils feel valued and happy. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are robust and checks regular. Pupils know who to go to if they have any worries and are confident to do so. Induction for pupils new to the school is good and they benefit from 'buddies', other pupils who will help them settle into school. There are comprehensive arrangements to help pupils transfer smoothly into secondary education. The school liaises closely with a range of outside agencies and procedures to ensure pupils attend school regularly have been effective. Pupils' progress is assessed frequently and pupils know they have targets, but not all are clear about what they are, or how to use them to improve their work. As a result, overall academic support and guidance for pupils are not as strong as they could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders accurately identify in the school improvement plan the general areas that need to be developed to improve standards. All interested parties have been involved and good account is taken of pupils' and parents' views. There is a wide range of systems for gathering information, in particular a comprehensive system for monitoring pupils' progress. There have been improvements in attendance, the curriculum and some pupils' writing. Despite these advancements, leadership and management are satisfactory rather than good because sometimes monitoring does not clearly identify the ways in which teachers can improve their work. Governors are very supportive, informed and regularly visit the school. At times, they do not sufficiently challenge school leaders, so governance is satisfactory. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion through assemblies, links with the community and good partnership with parents, most of whom are supportive of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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? | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 3 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 3 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| 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 |

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Wittersham CE Primary School, Tenterden TN30 7EA

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking with you and were impressed by how friendly, polite and confident you are. Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. These are some of the good points we found out about your school:

- You make sound progress, sometimes better in writing, throughout the school, but some of you could do better.
- You enjoy school and care for each other well.
- Your behaviour is good and you work and play together well.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe.
- You contribute to your school and local community well, for example through your school council, although some of you could be more involved in thinking for yourselves in lessons.
- Adults take good care of you so that you feel safe at school.

To help your school get better, we have asked the adults to:

- Make sure your work is not too easy, especially for those of you who can do harder work.
- Make more checks to make sure that all your lessons are helping you to improve.
- Make sure you have clear targets that show you how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Sue Orpin Lead inspector