

# Penshurst Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326881
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–10
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	4
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicky Dent
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julia Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Penshurst Tonbridge TN11 8BX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 870446
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 870446

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in this smaller than average school. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Penshurst Church of England Primary is an outstanding school. This is a view shared by the pupils and their parents. The overwhelming majority of parents express very positive views about almost all aspects of the school. In particular, they praise the excellent progress that their children make from the start of EYFS to the time the pupils leave at the end of Year 6. As one parent put it, 'I feel confident that staff are ensuring my child reaches her potential and more.'

Pupils greatly enjoy school because, as parents explain, 'they benefit from a varied and exciting curriculum'. Pupils get on very well together and their behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, they work with concentration and effort. As a result of these qualities, and teaching that is consistently good or better, pupils learn and achieve at an outstanding pace. As a result, standards by the end of Year 6 are exceptionally high. Standards are also very high at the end of Year 2, although able pupils have not been doing as well as they should in science. School leaders have identified that this is due in part to staff being overcautious in some of their assessments, but it is also the case that science in the infant class is overly reliant on worksheets that do not always stretch the more able pupils enough. Nevertheless, this does not set back pupils' overall achievement in this subject. Even though science in Year 2 has only been average in each of the years since the last inspection, Year 6 results in science have been consistently very high.

The headteacher, governors and staff have been highly successful in creating a school with such a positive ethos and where pupils are made to feel safe and secure. A parent described being 'particularly impressed by the caring, family ethos where older children help the younger ones'. Another explained that, 'My child is continually challenged to do his best and, when he does, he is always praised for his effort and achievement.' There is certainly no shortage of praise in this school, including in teachers' marking. There are also examples of marking that give clear pointers to pupils on how they can move their work on, but not all marking is of such a high standard.

The school's continued success is due to school leaders' constant evaluation of the effectiveness of what it does and a striving for continual improvement. Despite its exceptional academic track record, there is no hint of complacency in the school. Very effective partnerships have been forged with local secondary schools and other outside agencies to extend the curriculum and to help broaden pupils' horizons, so that they learn about cultures and different ways of life beyond their own everyday experiences. A careful track is kept of each pupil's progress and help is put in place where there is any sign of anyone falling behind. This also helps ensure that school leaders have an accurate picture of the school's many strengths and are on the lookout for where improvements can be made. Even though the school is unduly modest in its own assessment of how well it is doing, the highly effective way it has maintained its success shows that it has an excellent capacity for continued improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Staff have created a safe, attractive learning environment which is well resourced both indoors and outside. Parents are very appreciative of the positive start that their children receive in the EYFS, with children's welfare central to the work of the staff. Induction arrangements are

very good. Home visits are made and parents are fully involved in the progress their children are making. Children start school with skills above those expected for their age and they make outstanding progress because staff plan activities which are matched to each child's learning needs. There is a strong focus on the development of skills, such as counting and matching sounds and letters (phonics), which children then apply confidently to other learning. There is a very good balance of learning activities, some of which are led by adults and some of which are selected by children. Children become absorbed in their tasks and work with concentration. Very good use is made of the well-equipped outdoor area for learning, as well as for developing physical skills. Children develop extremely good personal and social skills because they make choices and develop independence through working with others. In this exceptionally well run provision, adults make observations of children and carefully assess their progress so that next steps for learning are identified. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are above those expected for children's ages. All statutory requirements are met and the school has fully embraced the recommendations of the new EYFS curriculum. Excellent partnerships with parents and external agencies support the learning of young children.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Set work in science in Years 1 and 2 that challenges and extends the most able pupils.
- Ensure that marking in all subjects gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to move their learning on.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards have been consistently high in each of the years since the last inspection. From their above average starting point when they join Year 1, pupils make very good progress through the infant years in reading, writing and mathematics. School leaders have identified that the most able have not always done as well as they could in science and have made changes this year. As a result, the school is on track to increase the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in science at the end of Year 2. The school is aware that there remains scope in Years 1 and 2, however, for greater challenge in the work given to more able pupils in this subject.

Results in the Year 6 national tests have been consistently very high, with pupils the equivalent of more than a year ahead of the national average. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well. In 2008, a very high proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils love coming to school and this is reflected in their attitudes and their excellent behaviour. They are polite, friendly and helpful. They show respect towards each other and adults in school. They say they feel safe in school and that any bullying is rare. If an incident does arise, it is quickly dealt with by teachers or other adults. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to make healthy choices at mealtimes and they appreciate the wide range of physical activities available in and out of school. They have an excellent sense of belonging to the local community and speak enthusiastically about links with the village. They are fully involved in the school Grounds Development Project to which they contribute their own ideas, and they enjoy the many opportunities they have to take responsibility within school. Pupils are also fully aware of the wider world beyond and have raised funds for charities such as Christian Aid

and Farm Aid which provided goats for families in Africa. They are exceptionally well prepared for their future economic well-being because the progress they make in academic and personal development is outstanding. Attendance has been consistently above average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding because pupils benefit from teaching that is consistently good or better. It is well planned so that there is generally a good match of work to the range of capabilities in each class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from very well-focused support from teaching assistants that helps them to make the same excellent progress made by others in their classes. Pupils push themselves to work hard because they like their teachers and are eager to please them. As a result, they work with effort and enthusiasm and they get a lot of work done in lessons. They are also extremely well motivated because, as the pupils explain, 'Teachers make the learning fun.'

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of opportunities for pupils to learn in and out of the classroom. In addition to meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum, pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn French and all pupils are developing their understanding of the need to conserve energy and take greater care of the school and local environment. Memorable first-hand experience plays a vital role, for example children in the Reception class, went on their own 'Bear Hunt' in the village to coincide with reading the story. Teachers also enhance the curriculum by linking subjects such as design and technology, history and information and communication technology (ICT) when studying topics such as the Great Fire of London. Pupils experienced their own sense of loss, by re-enacting the event and setting their own model houses on fire and considering how the people at the time might have felt. A very good range of extra-curricular activities and a wide range of visitors and visits provide further enrichment and opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community and the wider community beyond.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a safe and stimulating environment in which all pupils are valued, respected and cared for. All statutory requirements, including safeguarding and child protection arrangements, are fully met. Risk assessments are carried out to ensure that pupils are safe in school and when they are out on visits. There are examples of marking that give pupils practical guidance on how to improve their work, especially in English, but this is not consistent in all subjects or throughout the school. Some marking merely offers words of encouragement and sometimes overly effusive praise.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher, governors and staff work very effectively as a team to provide an exceptionally high standard of care and education for all its pupils. The school is constantly on the lookout for ways of improving what it does. It carefully analyses its performance and leaders have had considerable impact in boosting performance as a result. For example, analysis of the 2007 test results showed that although able pupils did very well in mathematics, there were fewer Level 5s in mathematics than English and science. By developing and drawing on a close partnership with a local grammar school, they boosted provision for the more able so that the number of Level 5s shot up in 2008, way beyond the school's already ambitious target.

School leaders have taken very seriously the duty schools now have to involve themselves and their pupils in the local and wider communities. Very strong partnerships have also been built within the locality, so that the school forms an important hub of village life. In addition to the strong Parent Teacher Association, Penshurst Church of England Primary has a separate Friends' Association that gives the village community an active role in the life of the school. Some members go on to join the governing body, which provides very good challenge to school leaders to help drive continued school improvement. School leaders have also ensured that pupils' experiences and horizons are broadened, so that they develop an excellent appreciation of the tapestry of cultures and beliefs that make up modern Britain.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penshurst Church of England Primary School, Tonbridge TN11 8BX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Some of you told us that you thought yours was an excellent school, and many of your parents said the same. You are right. Penshurst Church of England Primary is an outstanding school where you make excellent progress from the time you start in the Reception Year. You attain very high standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6. You also do very well in the Year 2 tests, although more able pupils have not always done as well as they should in science in these assessments. This lower start does not seem to slow your progress overall, because results in science by the end of Year 6 have been very high indeed. We have asked teachers, however, to make sure that children in the infant class are not given work that is too easy in science.

We were impressed with how very well behaved you are and how everyone gets on so well together. This, and the good care that staff take of you, helps to make Penshurst Church of England Primary such a happy place where you feel safe. You benefit from an exciting curriculum, with lots of extras arising from the imaginative partnerships that the school has developed with local secondary schools.

One of the key reasons that your school is so successful is the way that the headteacher, governors and staff work very effectively together and are always on the lookout for improvements that they can make. One area for improvement that we have asked them to look at is marking. Some of the marking, particularly in English, gives you lots of helpful pointers as to how you can make your work even better, so we have asked the school to ensure that the same is done throughout the school and across all subjects. You can help too by reading these comments carefully and following your teachers' advice on what you need to do to make your work even better.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully, Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector