

Aylesford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118287
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339183
Inspection dates	5-6 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

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	278
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Ballard
Headteacher	Sue Evans
Date of previous school inspection	12-13 October 2006
School address	Teapot Lane Aylesford Kent ME20 7JU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' work, safeguarding procedures, the work that pupils had produced in their books, curriculum planning and a range of school policies, procedures and planning. Inspectors also scrutinised 117 parents' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- data on pupils' progress and attainment
- the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2 and in mathematics
- attendance and other aspects of pupils' personal development
- the quality of the curriculum
- how well pupils are supervised.

Information about the school

Aylesford is a larger than average primary school. From Reception to Year 6, some pupils are taught in single-age and some in mixed-age classes. A broadly average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, comprising mainly moderate learning, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is lower than is usually found. A very large majority of the pupils are of White British heritage.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Aylesford is a satisfactory school where pupils are making sound progress in their work and enjoying the topics through which much of the curriculum is taught. Since the last inspection many changes have been made and pupils are benefiting from these initiatives. However, several of these developments are not fully embedded in the practice of teachers, or in pupils' attitudes and approaches, so that outcomes are satisfactory rather than good or better at present. Evidence of achievements to date indicates that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards. They make satisfactory progress in their learning as they move through the school, attaining broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children are alert but, at this early stage of their time in school, some are slow to respond appropriately which restricts their progress. Inattentiveness in Years 1 to 6 also reduces the quantity and quality of work completed, with the result that progress is no more than satisfactory.

Attendance has improved and is now good, not least because pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is often good, but occasionally too boisterous out of lessons when silliness results in some pupils becoming upset. Pupils of different backgrounds respond well to one another. They know what is right and wrong but a few tend to push the boundaries to the limit of what constitutes appropriate conduct. A number of older pupils are keen to support their younger peers, applying to be buddies for children as they enter the school.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but it is not as good as the school's self-evaluation would suggest. A small minority of teaching is good, where pupils achieve well and enjoy their lessons. They remain attentive and strive for success. In the large majority of lessons, however, teaching is no better than satisfactory. Pupils often continue to enjoy what they are doing but chatter replaces learning at times and there is insufficient checking of pupils' knowledge and understanding in some classes. The curriculum retains an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy, as well as providing many opportunities to link subjects together under interesting topic headings. However, in some planning, while ideas to interest and motivate pupils are good, the expectations of what should be learned are not fully set out, which can prevent pupils achieving the highest possible standards. The supervision of pupils outside lessons is satisfactory but small incidents are not always dealt with appropriately and can spill over into lessons. The quality of pastoral care is

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satisfactory, staff know their pupils well and care for them individually.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, one where standards are high, teaching is very effective and pupils enjoy learning. However, this is not consistently implemented, which results in patchy outcomes. A rather too generous view of the quality of teaching and learning has hindered progress. Self-evaluation overall is satisfactory. Partnerships with parents and carers are improving with good communication, although a small minority of parents remain unhappy with some aspects of school life. Procedures that safeguard pupils' well-being and safety are in place. Satisfactory use is made of the good resources and the school environment is a pleasant place to work and much improved since the last inspection. Governance is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by:
 - raising the expectations of teachers and pupils
 - ensuring a sharper focus on the assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure a balance of achievement and enjoyment in lessons and the appropriate coverage of requirements by:
 - fully implementing the school's curriculum policy
 - monitoring curriculum planning and implementation.
- Improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour from satisfactory to good by raising the standard of supervision outside lessons.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Work in lessons and in pupils' books indicates that current standards in Year 6 are broadly average, and higher than in national assessments in 2009. In the three-year period 2006 to 2008, standards rose, with no one group achieving markedly better than another. Pupils make sound progress overall and the progress made by pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements, is similar to their peers. A school initiative to tackle some underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics by more able Year 2 pupils has been successful so that all groups now make similar progress and standards are broadly average.

In lessons, pupils speak confidently although not always with an extended vocabulary. They write with pleasure and an acceptable degree of accuracy as part of their topic work. Pupils' number work is sound and improving. A Year 6 pupil reflected the views of her class about the rising standards in mathematics when she

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said, 'Our tables work is much more difficult this year and we have to get it right now.' Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are sound.

The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils in lessons is good. They are polite and sensible. Occasional problems stem from pupils' inattention, which develops from low expectations of what pupils could be achieving. When misbehaviour does occur, pupils respond quickly and positively to firm instructions. Pupils generally feel safe. Many pupils respond well to the school's healthy living programme, taking part in extra-curricular sport and generally eating healthy lunches, although not all packed lunches are healthy. Pupils elected to the school council take their role seriously and their ideas have led to improvements, such as those to the toilet facilities. Pupils' confidence, good attendance record and their satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills will be helpful as pupils move on to their next schools. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

In a minority of lessons, where teaching is good, teachers' expectations are high, there is good pace and questioning that ensure teaching engages with the wide range of pupils' prior knowledge. Good marking shows pupils what to do next. In these lessons, pupils know what is expected of them and maintain their efforts and progress is good. However, in the majority of lessons, although teaching is satisfactory and motivates pupils' interest, work often does not present enough challenge and chattering among pupils is accepted. Assessment techniques are not

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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sufficiently rigorous to identify when pupils are not working hard enough or are unclear about what they are doing. For example, not all answers which pupils record on their small whiteboards are checked so that weaknesses in learning can be followed up.

The recent initiative to enhance cross-curricular links between subjects is making lessons more enjoyable and interesting. It is at an early stage of implementation and at times an over emphasis on enjoyment takes precedence over a proper consideration of what pupils might be learning. Class timetables are insufficiently detailed in some cases and planning indicates that better use could be made of the available time. For example, in one class, 90 minutes of literacy, guided reading and handwriting led to a relatively slow pace of work and some underachievement. Extra-curricular opportunities, particularly in sport, enhance pupils’ healthy life choices.

Staff know their pupils well and care for them individually in lessons. Support for vulnerable pupils is effective and so they make as much progress as their peers. Some support staff, particularly those providing family guidance, are very effective. The inconsistent way that some staff deal with misdemeanours at break times leads to pupils not having a clear enough picture of what is acceptable behaviour. For example, some supervising staff, while maintaining a satisfactory supervision in the playground, do not always intervene to discourage the silly or boisterous activity of a few. The pupils benefit from good links with the main secondary school to which many of them transfer at age eleven.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Progress has been made over the past three years under the leadership of the headteacher, as staffing issues have been resolved, improvements in the décor and learning resources made and worthwhile initiatives introduced. The monitoring of teaching and learning through reviews of planning and pupils’ work and lesson observations has led to some improvements. The high quality ICT facilities have great potential for enhancing pupils’ skills but the use made of computers is patchy.

The senior team works well together and English and mathematics subject leaders have a clear view of the way forward. All are working with their colleagues to ensure that teaching and learning improve and that the curriculum as planned is thoroughly implemented. There is a will to succeed. Challenging targets have been set for pupils’

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English and mathematics assessment results in Year 6.

Parents and carers receive termly information about their children’s progress and curriculum evenings are arranged to help parents understand what is being taught. A very small minority of parents remain to be convinced that their children are receiving as good an education as they want for them. Supportive partnerships with other schools are sound. Good quality guidance is provided for statemented and other vulnerable pupils to ensure that they have access to a similar quality of education to their peers. Those most at risk are identified and their welfare and progress monitored. Pupils’ backgrounds are well known to staff and efforts are made to value, for example, different religious festivals and cultures. Tolerance and appreciation of others are promoted and pupils are engaged in meeting with, and supporting, the local community through, for example, harvest festival giving. Any discrimination, on whatever grounds, is rigorously followed up. The school’s promotion of community cohesion is generally satisfactory, but is not yet systematically monitored by school leaders and governors.

Governors are well intentioned and satisfactorily carry out their statutory duties, including the monitoring of policies such as those for anti-bullying and child protection. They ensure that all required safeguarding requirements are met, including checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils, maintaining a central record of staff details, and making sure that all staff have suitable child protection training. They are aware of the strengths of the school but are less familiar with its weaknesses, and they do not question sufficiently the rate of progress against the school’s priorities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

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Children’s achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Children make sound, or better, progress. Attainment is a little above the national expectation by the end of children’s time in the Reception year, with strengths in language and communication. Most enjoy their learning, feel safe and form trusting relationships with adults. Children cooperate and participate well in general, but their behaviour is not always conducive to good learning. Teaching is sound overall, with some good practice. Staff ensure that children’s welfare has the highest priority. Observing and assessing the quality of pupil interaction and learning are strengths, although the use made of this information to inform planning is not as strong. Relationships between staff and pupils are secure and helpful. Resources are satisfactory. Leadership and management are effective in deploying staff and available resources for the benefit of the children. Staff are suitably trained, with good support provided for those new to the setting. Relationships with parents and pre-school groups are strong.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of the parents and carers of pupils at Aylesford School are pleased with the education provided. The very small minority that are unhappy have concerns about their children’s progress and the information they receive about how well their children are doing. A few parents consider that the school should help them more to guide their own children at home. A few parents also believe that their children’s particular needs are not met, unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with well, and insufficient account is taken of their suggestions and concerns. Particularly positive comments made by parents include how happy their children are at the school and the good progress they are making, the fact that the headteacher and her staff are very approachable and happy to talk and listen, the outstanding senior leadership team, and the strong support they have for the changes the headteacher is making.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aylesford School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 278 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	42	64	55	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	53	45	58	50	3	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	36	31	63	54	15	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	28	61	52	13	11	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	34	29	71	61	7	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	43	37	53	45	15	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	36	65	56	5	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	35	51	44	7	6	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	35	29	63	54	12	10	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	28	60	51	16	14	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	34	46	39	19	16	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	43	37	53	45	11	9	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	44	38	57	49	11	9	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



7 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aylesford School, Aylesford ME20 7JU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you.

You told us how much you enjoy the topics you are studying, how many of you get on well with your teachers, and how the school has improved since you have been there.

Your attendance has improved over the past year and you are making satisfactory progress in your work. In lessons many of you listen carefully to your teachers and want to do well, but you can lose concentration at times and chatter too much to one another. When this happens, you don't make the progress that you should. We have asked the headteacher to check that all the staff encourage you to work harder than you do. Teachers will be questioning you more closely to see that you have understood what is being taught and giving you more work to do.

Teachers plan work for you so that it's interesting and enjoyable. However, sometimes having fun becomes more important than learning and this is not helping you to succeed. We do want you to continue enjoying your lessons but we also want you to do well in your studies, and so teachers are going to plan to make sure this happens.

In lessons you usually behave well, but during breaks and lunch times some of you can be very lively and silly. Staff looking after you when you are not in lessons are going to supervise you more carefully to make sure you all behave well.

The headteacher and her staff are working hard to make helpful changes in the way your school is run so you can all do well and enjoy your time at Aylesford.

Yours faithfully

Peter McGregor
Lead inspector

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