

Tenterden Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118382
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379611
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Wendy Forbes

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Wells
Headteacher	Gillian Guthrie
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Wendy Forbes

Additional inspector

Allan Barfoot

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 13 part-lessons, amounting to approximately eight hours in total, seeing all nine teachers teach. For approximately a quarter of the lessons, inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher or deputy head. Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy head, members of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and policies. They also analysed questionnaires from 92 parents and carers and 33 staff. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

Information about the school

This two-form entry school is smaller than an average-sized school. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises two Reception classes. There is also an on-site Children's Centre. This is managed by an external provider and is inspected separately. Since the last inspection, the school has entered into a formal collaboration with its partner junior school in preparation for the hard federation of both schools from September 2012. A new executive headteacher, previously headteacher of the infant school, was appointed in September 2010. The school has developed the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor learning area since the previous inspection. The largest group of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic heritages is well below average. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average. The school has achieved Healthy School status and ECO (Silver) awards.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Tenterden Infant School is a good school with many notable strengths. It has improved well and has good capacity to be even better.
- Pupils feel very happy, hold extremely positive attitudes, feel very safe and clearly love learning. As a result, their behaviour is exemplary and characterised by excellent manners and courtesy.
- Under the good leadership of the executive headteacher, the school has continued to thrive. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils make at least good progress in their learning so that by the end of Year 2, pupils achieve well because the school has high expectations of them. Above average achievement, particularly in reading, has been sustained since the last inspection and progress in writing has accelerated because of the school's significant focus on the development of literacy skills.
- Progress in mathematics is slower than in reading and writing. Teaching is good, and sometimes better, and regularly enthuses pupils. Nevertheless, in a very few lessons, particularly in mathematics, teachers do not always provide activities that extend and challenge pupils, use and extend number skills or develop problem-solving, in order to accelerate progress, particularly for the more able.
- Pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are promoted extremely well through special events, attractive school displays, charity fund-raising and community projects
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a dynamic partnership. They work well together to guide and support staff, and are determined to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. This has created confidence and a real sense of purpose amongst the whole school community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics and improve the achievement of higher attaining pupils by:

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- providing more activities and tasks in lessons that challenge pupils to think and extend their numeracy competencies
- ensuring that the work in books offers enough challenge to develop pupils' problem-solving skills
- providing targeted staff development in order to strengthen the teaching of mathematics .

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers commented on how delighted they were with their children's current progress and their children's desire to want to learn. This view is endorsed by the inspector's findings. Children enter school with skills that are broadly in line with national expectations in most areas of learning, lower in writing. As a result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching, pupils make at least good progress, especially in developing their early reading and writing skills. This is because of the school's significant focus on developing literacy skills, particularly the extremely well tailored programme of teaching letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which children enjoy. This was seen as children recounted the story of Goldilocks and the three bears using 'talking postcards' and speech bubbles to create their own story starters. The teacher's skilful questioning helped children to extend their vocabulary and write descriptive sentences.

Throughout the school the quality of learning and progress in most lessons is good and sometimes better. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils were excited in their learning as they went on a word hunt around their classroom to find 'wow' words to use in their writing about dragons. The activities were creatively structured and closely matched to pupils' previous learning. As a result, pupils made good progress in developing their literacy competencies and descriptive writing.

Attainment is above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the last inspection, pupils have sustained their excellent reading and accelerated improvements in their writing skills. This is due to the school's key focus on improving literacy competencies. However, pupils make slower progress in mathematics. This is because work is not always well matched to pupils' differing needs, particularly the most able. As a consequence, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough to use, apply and extend their numeracy skills. National test results suggested boys were doing better than girls. Inspection evidence confirmed that this gap has been closed for the current cohort. This is as a result of improvements in the use of assessment data to track pupils' achievements and target-setting and the focus given to understanding pupils' learning styles, particularly those of boys. Pupils who have special educational needs do as well as their peers, because staff make suitable adjustments to materials and activities. High levels of staffing, together with very effective support received from teaching

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assistants, enable pupils of varying abilities to make at least equally good progress as their peers, or sometimes outstanding progress.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers say that they feel their children are well taught at the school. Classrooms are typically attractive and interesting learning environments. As one pupil said 'My classroom often takes my breath away.' The good, and sometimes outstanding, quality of teaching has been sustained since the last inspection and is leading to pupils making faster progress than previously, particularly in writing. A focus on the teaching of writing and the provision of staff development to support this has had a positive impact on how literacy lessons are taught. The school has also taken effective steps to sustain the investment in, and focus on, reading throughout the school, whilst also improving the teaching of writing. As a result, even the youngest children have well-developed literacy skills. The themed curriculum linking subjects ensures a range of activities that encourage pupils equally well. However, the impact of recent developments in the new and innovative mathematics curriculum designed to support and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics has yet to be fully realised. Teachers' good role modelling promotes very positive relationships and develops good levels of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Expectations are high. Teachers are enthusiastic, well organised and have good subject knowledge. All staff use praise well to celebrate pupils' achievement. Teaching assistants provide well-targeted support, especially for those who find learning more difficult.

In the best lessons seen, pupils are challenged in their learning. Teachers are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning and good use of 'talk partners', creating a confident working atmosphere within the classroom. Pupils are motivated, taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, in Year 1, pupils created a word bank of descriptive language to write poetry based on a Chinese story and in Year 2, pupils used their good knowledge of number to transform a mathematical problem into a 'real life' story. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children skilfully investigated the recent snow and ice using weighing apparatus and magnifying glasses as they hypothesised as to whether ice or snow would be heavier or lighter once defrosted. Although teachers' good subject knowledge and effective use of a range of teaching styles takes good account of pupils' learning needs not all tasks set consistently challenge in practice, particularly the more able in mathematics. As a result, their progress is not as rapid as it could be and the attainment of these pupils not always as high as it should be. Pupils are helped to consider how well they have worked and what they most enjoyed, but the otherwise well-constructed self-assessment opportunities focus heavily on the pupils' enjoyment of learning, occasionally missing opportunities to encourage pupils to evaluate how they could improve.

Parents and carers expressed views in the Ofsted questionnaire that teaching was good and had improved. Inspection findings confirm this to be the case.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. It is an extremely well-ordered community where exemplary behaviour and safety and excellent pastoral care and support help pupils develop good personal skills and foster their very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' outstanding behaviour is characterised by the exceptional courtesy and manners and the respect they show for one another. Pupils say they feel extremely safe, any form of bullying is rare and they are confident that there is always someone they can talk to if they feel worried. The vast majority of parents and carers also reported that they, too, are confident that the school's systems are sufficiently robust to deal with any incidences of bullying, should they ever occur.

Pupils develop a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. For instance, they have a keen awareness of the importance of 'e-safety' when using the internet and have participated in safety awareness sessions run by representatives from some of the emergency services. Pupils have a good appreciation of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and participate in sporting activities and eat the fresh fruit available in the classrooms. This, together with their above average levels of attendance and skills in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as information and communication technology, shows they are well prepared when they transfer to their junior school with which the school enjoys well-developed links through its collaborative partnership.

Leadership and management

The success of the school is underpinned by good leadership. Since the last inspection, the drive, ambition and clear direction of the now executive headteacher, with good support from senior staff and members of the governing body, has enabled the school to continue to thrive. The headteacher's dynamic approach enthuses others to have the highest possible aspirations for themselves and the pupils. There is a strong sense of purpose and expectations are high. This has had a significant impact on sustaining pupils' above average achievement and in strengthening the quality of teaching, especially in writing. Senior staff are fully committed to accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics and ambitious to make sure that all lessons are good or better so that all pupils achieve well, particularly the most able. A planned programme of professional development has been embraced by staff. This focus has already led to a narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' achievement, accelerated progress in writing and improvements in the mathematics curriculum. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum has been strengthened with significant developments in the outside learning area, which now ensures a good balance and free-flow of learning activities. The school's creative curriculum meets the needs of most learners well, making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. It is further enriched by a wide range of visitors to the school such as artists, story-tellers and people who work or help in the community, as well as visits to places of interest. Pupils enjoy participating in extra-curricular activities such as knitting club, cookery, gardening and gymnastics. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well by the

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curriculum and high expectations of all staff, who present very positive role models for the pupils.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well and all pupils are exceptionally well cared for and supported. A strong emphasis on all aspects of pupils' personal development through the school's personal, social and health education programme promotes the well-being of all pupils. The school has good procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet government guidelines and include high-quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of pupils. The improvement since the last inspection and the accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses confirm that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

The development of a collaborative partnership with the feeder junior school has been well managed by governors through the appointment of a new executive headteacher and laid firm foundations for the implementation of a hard federation from September 2012. This strong partnership is further complemented by close links with the on-site Children's Centre, which ensures a smooth transition to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tenterden Infant School, Tenterden TN30 6RA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons, at lunchtime and when we listened to some of you read. You told us that you enjoy school and feel very safe. We were particularly impressed with your reading and also the lovely singing in assembly.

I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school that has improved further since its previous inspection. You and your parents and carers told us that you like school and that it is a happy place where you feel very safe. You are very well behaved and impressed the inspection team by your good manners and politeness. We were pleased to see how kind you were to each other and how well you listen in lessons. You are making good progress in your work and you are taught well. Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined to help you succeed. They know how to make sure that your school continues to get even better and I have asked them to do the following:

- ensure that more of you make faster progress in mathematics by ensuring that work is not too easy or too hard and provides just the right level of challenge, particularly for the more able
- to have more opportunities to practise your problem-solving skills
- ensure more of you benefit from the extremely good or better teaching seen in some lessons.

Keep up the good work and we are sure that if you do this, you will continue to enjoy learning for a long time to come.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes
Lead inspector

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