

Guston Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118687
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379660
Inspection dates	29 February–1 March 2012
Lead inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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 of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Philpott
Headteacher	Deby Allen
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent six hours observing teaching, which included visiting 12 lessons and observing six teachers. The inspector heard groups of pupils reading in Years 1, 2 and 6 and held meetings with pupils. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at documentation including policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and records of their learning and progress. In addition, the inspector considered the responses to questionnaires from 93 parents and carers, as well as responses in questionnaires submitted by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Guston is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from army families living close to the school, although a minority from the wider community live further afield. About 70% of the pupils are from Nepal and a high proportion speak English as an additional language. Most other pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is line with the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a single Reception class.

The number of pupils on roll has increased since the headteacher took up post four years ago. High proportions of pupils join or leave the school at times other than normal. In particular, three quarters of the current Year 6 joined the school during Key Stage 2. The main reason for turnover is the postings of army families. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils' attainment is average by Year 6, although better in reading and mathematics than in writing. Following a good start in Reception Year, pupils make good progress through the school. By Year 6, most are competent writers, although their vocabulary choices are not very imaginative and spelling is sometimes inaccurate. A few pronounce words and sounds inaccurately. These issues and some inconsistencies in teaching explain why the school is good rather than outstanding.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those from different minority ethnic groups make progress in line with their peers. The considerable numbers who join in different year groups are given excellent pastoral support and integrate very well. The school is vigilant in helping pupils from all backgrounds to do well and there are robust procedures for helping those who need to catch up.
- Teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding but there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Most teachers use pupils' assessments well to match lessons closely to their needs. However, staff do not consistently encourage lower attaining pupils to develop independence and to apply phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) when writing.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and their attendance is above average. The school cares for them very well and they feel very safe. Occasionally, however, pupils' attention begins to wander during lesson introductions, when teachers keep them listening for too long.
- The headteacher provides very strong leadership and is well supported by staff and governors. Leaders have tackled the issues from the previous inspection well and standards have risen. Key to the school's success is the comprehensive system for monitoring pupils' progress. The rigorous monitoring of teaching, good performance management and effective professional development have improved both teaching and achievement. Given the good improvements since the previous inspection, the school demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in communication and literacy by December 2012 by:
 - improving the accuracy of pupils' pronunciation of words and sounds
 - strengthening their ability to spell accurately and to use imaginative vocabulary in their writing
 - helping lower attaining pupils to use their phonics skills consistently to sound out words when writing.
- Build on current good teaching and pupils' good learning and progress so that there is clear improvement by July 2012, through:
 - refining teaching styles so that pupils are given consistent opportunities for discussion and active learning during lesson introductions
 - ensuring teaching assistants enable lower attaining pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.

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Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well. Children's starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below age-related expectations because the majority are at early stages of learning English. Good progress in Reception Year, with outstanding progress in language for communication and thinking, lifts their attainment to broadly average on entry to Year 1. Good progress continues and pupils' attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. Attainment for Year 2 pupils has risen in recent years, which gives them a better start to their Key Stage 2 education.

In the current Year 6, pupils' attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics and this represents good progress from their below-average starting points on entry to Key Stage 2. This includes the good progress of the many later entrants who join the school with gaps in their knowledge and skills. Well-focused individual support promotes the good progress of later entrants, those learning English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. There are no significant differences in the achievement of girls and boys, or minority ethnic groups, including White British pupils. Pupils are competent readers and mathematicians. They write eagerly for a range of purposes but vocabulary choices are often unimaginative and occasional spelling weaknesses impair the quality of their written work.

Pupils develop communication skills well and many are fluent speakers by Year 6. However, a few lower attaining pupils are sometimes inaccurate in their pronunciation of words and phonics, which hinders their reading and writing. Pupils make good progress overall in phonics. Throughout the school, pupils learn phonics in ability sets, enabling those who need extra challenge to work at higher levels, whilst those who struggle are taught using smaller learning steps. Pupils build their speaking, phonics, reading and writing skills well in these sessions. In Reception Year, interesting practical resources and very clear pronunciation by staff ensure children develop their vocabulary and their own accurate pronunciation and recognition of sounds and letters. In Years 1 and 2, very effective use of whiteboards enables pupils to transfer phonics skills to writing. However, in literacy in Key Stage 2, lower attaining pupils' progress occasionally slows when they are not given enough opportunity to practise their phonics skills orally or to apply them when writing. Pupils apply their reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well across the curriculum.

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires agree that their children make good progress and most say they would recommend this school to other parents.

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Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching in most lessons is good, with a few examples of outstanding practice. The vast majority of parents believe teaching to be good. Relationships are excellent and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. The school's rewards and sanctions are clear to pupils and are used consistently. The key features of good and better lessons are: high expectations for pupils of all abilities; clear planning that is informed by pupils' targets and assessments; balanced opportunities for pupils to learn through discussion and investigation; frequent checking of pupils' understanding of key vocabulary; and practical learning opportunities underpinning academic work. For example, during World Book Day, pupils and staff dressed up as their favourite story characters to encourage pupils' enthusiasm for reading and to share their sense of wonder in different literature. Literacy lessons subsequently built upon this and, in Year 3, the teacher's good assessment ensured pupils of all abilities applied their phonics skills well when they wrote about their favourite stories. The teaching of mathematics is good because teachers have strong subject knowledge and ICT is used most effectively to promote learning. For example, in Year 6, the teacher used interactive whiteboard technology to present whole-class revision as a game. Pupils of all abilities found tackling mathematical problems fun and said the lesson helped them to identify clearly where they needed to improve. In Year 2, the teacher's excellent use of ICT, after practical investigations, helped pupils to reinforce their understanding of standard measures well.

Teaching assistants often provide a significant contribution to pupils' learning, including those with limited English, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, in a minority of lessons, teaching assistants do too much for lower attaining pupils and do not consistently encourage them to use phonics to sound out words before writing. In a minority of lesson introductions in Key Stage 2, teachers spend too long on instruction and do not give enough time for discussion and investigation. Marking of pupils' work is regular and uniform systems for written feedback to pupils are a steadily improving current focus. Homework and target setting are systematic and contribute well to pupils' learning. The carefully planned curriculum provides a strong framework for teaching basic skills, for providing opportunities where one subject enhances another and for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It develops pupils' inquisitiveness and sense of wonder very well through investigation of the natural world and then, for example, using art and design to create imaginative pictures or models.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers are rightly pleased with pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school. Pupils and staff also say that pupils typically behave well in the playground and in lessons. The inspection findings echo these views. The school is a very harmonious community, where pupils of all backgrounds work and play together. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons, at lunchtimes and at playtimes. Pupils who have been in school from Reception Year through to Year 6 are adamant that the school

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has always been a happy and safe place to be. Pupils are courteous, friendly and eager to learn. However, when they are kept sitting and listening for too long during lesson introductions, their concentration wanes and they begin to fidget. Children in Reception Year learn to take some responsibility for their own learning, often sustaining concentration well when learning independently because there are many interesting activities. For example, during the 'tricycle safari', children followed simple 'road rules' when spotting 'animals'. Independent and teamwork skills continue to develop well in the rest of the school, for example, through design and technology when Year 6 pupils designed and made castles after visiting Dover Castle.

Pupils' well-established understanding of right from wrong is developed strongly through the consistent approach of staff to behaviour management. Several later entrants and their parents told the inspector how well they were welcomed by other pupils and supported by staff. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are helped very well and learn to adjust to school. Pupils say they feel very safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They understand different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say there is no bullying and that they trust adults to deal with any that might occur.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, underpinned by a determination to pursue constant improvement. The leadership structure gives responsibility to leaders at all levels. Subject leaders are taking an increasingly significant role in raising attainment; they provide guidance to colleagues and observe teaching and learning, although a few who are new to their roles are still developing this skill. Robust checks on the progress of individual pupils and groups have led to clear priorities in improvement plans for addressing areas of weakness. The monitoring and evaluation of staff's work are thorough and they are held to account for pupils' performance. The positive impact of actions taken, including professional development, is evident in the improvement in pupils' achievement.

The governing body has developed its strategic role and holds the school to account for its performance. In recent years, governors have developed their skills and are now able to support and challenge the school in equal measure. By monitoring pupils' progress and taking effective action, the governing body and all leaders and managers promote equality and tackle discrimination. The school recognises that further work is needed to improve writing. School leaders and governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and include all the required checks on staff and child protection training. The good curriculum focuses on the basic skills, coupled with a rich array of practical activities to bring learning alive. Thoroughly planned opportunities support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school has improved well since its previous inspection and the quality of teaching is better. The school engages well with parents and carers, who are rightly pleased with the progress their children are making. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Guston Church of England Primary School, Dover CT15 5LR

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

First, you told me that your school is a good one and I agree. Here are some of the many things your school does well.

- You make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- Those of you in Reception Year get off to a good start and enjoy all of the activities.
- You help to make your school a very friendly place because you are polite, helpful and behave well.
- You are very welcoming to newcomers and those of you who were later arrivals told me how much you enjoyed coming to this school.
- You have many interesting opportunities for using computers and you told me how you enjoyed mathematics.
- Your headteacher leads you all very well and all the staff and governors think very carefully about what is best for you.
- Staff take very good care of you. You told me you that get extra help if you need it so you can learn new things as quickly as possible, and I agree.

This is what I am asking your school to do to improve.

- Help you to improve your spelling and to use more exciting words when writing.
- Help some of you to improve your pronunciation of sounds and words and always to use phonics to sound out words when writing.
- Ensure you always have good opportunities for discussion during lesson introductions and that you always do as much as possible for yourselves.

I hope all of you will continue to enjoy school and carry on working hard in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick
Lead inspector

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