

Guston CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118687
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313046
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Orpin

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 on roll	
School (total)	141

Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
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Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend John W Philpott
Headteacher	Miss Deborah L Allen
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2004
School address	Burgoyne Heights Guston, Dover Kent CT15 5LR
Telephone number	01304 206847
Fax number	01304 210698

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils are from the large army barracks, situated nearby. Consequently, pupils' mobility is very high, as families move with their battalions. Very few pupils have been at the school since the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Most pupils are from Nepal and a very high proportion of pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), most having joined the school with little or no understanding of English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. The majority of pupils join different year groups throughout the school, with little or no English. Their limited language skills make their initial assessments particularly low. These pupils make good progress and catch up quickly, soon after they start. However, progress slows when they become proficient in English, because the level of challenge is not always sustained. By the time they leave, most pupils reach broadly average standards, and their achievement is satisfactory. The school has successfully focused its attention on improving all pupils' English skills and there are some signs of improvement in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and use their skills well to learn other subjects. Achievement in science is satisfactory, although standards are below average.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. As a result, they really care for each other and bullying is rare. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Their good awareness of right and wrong means they behave well most of the time. They work and play together willingly, valuing and respecting differences. Not surprisingly, they enjoy attending. Pupils readily undertake responsibilities, although in some lessons, they are not involved enough in taking responsibility for their own learning.

Pupils who join the school at a very early stage of learning English receive good support to develop their language skills and make good progress. Teachers and their assistants carefully plan activities so they very quickly begin to develop the ability to learn in English. Despite this good feature, teaching is satisfactory because sometimes the work planned is too easy for more able pupils and other pupils who have better understanding of English. This means many pupils could achieve even better standards. The good curriculum provides variety and is made relevant and enjoyable through themes and projects. The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. However, pastoral care is good and reflects one parent's comment that "Guston is an extremely caring and accommodating school." Pupils feel secure, valued and are helped to settle easily into the school. Academic guidance is less well developed as pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.

The new headteacher has a good understanding of how to improve standards further. There has been good improvement in writing, pupils' attendance and the curriculum. Despite these improvements, leadership and management are satisfactory rather than good because regular monitoring of teaching is not established and the role of leaders at all levels is not fully developed. This means that the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory rather than good, particularly as governors do not ask sufficiently challenging questions of school leaders to help it improve rapidly on all fronts. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children enter the school, they are at levels well below those expected for their age, partly because of their limited understanding of English. Liaison with parents is

good and effective induction procedures, including close links with the local playgroup, ensure that children settle into school well. Despite the children's weaker language and social skills, the school effectively promotes their language development using extensive opportunities for speaking and listening, and well targeted EAL support. Careful planning ensures that they have regular access to all of the areas of learning. There is a good mix of child-initiated and teacher-led activities, which result in their good creative and imaginative play. Teaching assistants are effective in helping children develop their language skills and they model positive learning attitudes for later classes. Phonics teaching has enabled children to progress rapidly in reading. They make particularly good progress in counting, through well targeted tasks and repetition. However, teaching is satisfactory rather than good, as once they have mastered English, children remain insufficiently challenged by the tasks set for them and ongoing assessment is not always used to inform the planning of tasks and activities. Consequently, more able children do not always do as well as they should and most do not reach the average standards expected by the end of the EYFS. The leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is sufficiently challenging, especially for those who are more able, particularly to raise standards in science.
- Develop teachers' use of assessment, marking and the process of setting targets to ensure they help pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the monitoring of teaching and role of subject leaders to make sure that all lessons and activities planned challenge pupils' thinking to help raise the school's effectiveness further.

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 and mathematics in Years 2 and 6 are broadly average, representing a steady improvement in recent years, especially in Year 2, where standards have been below average. The upward trend is particularly noticeable in writing, which has been an area of focus for the school. There has been an increase in the number of higher levels achieved by pupils in Year 2. The support given to those at the early stages of learning English helps them quickly learn basic skills, so they make rapid progress. However, once proficient in English, pupils' progress slows because teaching does not continue to provide the same level of challenge through the school. Science standards continue to be below average, as they have been in recent years, and pupils' progress is satisfactory. Pupils who have been at the school since EYFS and those for whom English is their first language make good progress in learning English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and are keen to participate in activities. This is reflected in their satisfactory attendance, which is improving despite parents returning from active service, which sometimes means that groups of pupils have holidays inside term time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the diversity of pupils' backgrounds within the school helps pupils be more appreciative of others. Behaviour is generally good, both in lessons and around the school, although there are a few occasions when they become distracted. Pupils cooperate well, are caring and bullying is rare. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, as demonstrated by their safe practices and healthy attitudes, illustrated in the fruit snacks at playtime and their regular consumption of water. They contribute well to the wider community, for example through charitable fundraising, close links with the church and a very active school council. Despite pupils' willingness to undertake responsibilities, in some lessons they are not well enough involved in taking responsibility for their learning. Pupils' ability to work together and their good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT mean they are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers and pupils work well together because relationships are positive, supportive and productive. Interactive whiteboards are used well, making lessons interesting and informative. Teachers and their assistants are good at helping pupils to develop their language skills and understand new words in English. For example, in a lesson about writing stories, the teacher demonstrated the meaning of abstract words, such as 'fear' and 'spin around', so helping pupils understand and use a wider vocabulary. As a result, pupils make quick progress from the time they join the school. However, teaching is satisfactory rather than good because once pupils are proficient in English, their progress slows as a result of a diminished level of challenge. Teachers generally manage pupils well. In some lessons, teachers do not make good use of assessment information to plan activities and tasks, so the work set for pupils is sometimes too easy, particularly for pupils who are more able. At times, the pace of the lesson is too slow for some pupils, because more explanation is needed for others, where teachers have not planned for the wide range of differing needs in their class. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but sometimes miss opportunities to inform them about how they might improve more quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides variety that pupils enjoy. In Years 1 and 2, the thematic approach makes learning more stimulating, for example through topics, such as 'Dinosaurs' and 'Space'. In Years 3 to 6, good links between subjects make pupils' learning more motivating, for example through projects, such as 'Aboriginal Art'. The high proportion of pupils with EAL benefit from a good provision through support in lessons and withdrawal in small groups. This carefully targeted and planned support helps pupils' understanding in all lessons and is a major factor in their good progress.

The programme of personal, social and health education is good. Pupils learn and use their skills in ICT well, through other subjects, as they progress through the school. The range of trips and visitors is varied, with good use made of the local environment, for example Dover Castle. The range of extra-curricular activities is good, including clubs, such as volleyball, recorders and table tennis. Although the curriculum is carefully planned, there are some occasions when work is duplicated, especially in mixed-age classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has a calm and friendly atmosphere, so pupils feel secure 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. New pupils are assessed within two weeks of arriving and good support provided for those with EAL, or learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school liaises closely with a range of outside agencies, including pupils' previous schools, to ensure good levels of care and support for all pupils, including those most at risk. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and older pupils know their targets in literacy, but not numeracy, which hinders greater progress. Information gained from checks on pupils' progress is not used sufficiently to help improve teaching and for pupils to progress further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and has successfully shared this with staff and governors. She has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards further. There is now a clear planning cycle, involving all interested parties, and this informs the school improvement plan. However, it contains insufficient detail to help the school gauge if objectives are being met. Governors are supportive but they do not sufficiently challenge school leaders about raising standards more quickly. Detailed checks on pupils' progress are now beginning to be used, but have had limited impact on improving results significantly in mathematics and science. However, the checks on the progress of pupils with EAL are good. Although the monitoring of teaching and learning is regular, it has not yet become established or effective in identifying how teaching can be good rather than satisfactory. The role of subject and phase leaders is still not sufficiently developed, so improvements have been slow to take effect. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through assemblies, the work of the EAL coordinator and partnership with parents who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

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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?	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

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 is 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

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	2

¹ 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

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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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?	2
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

22 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Guston CE Primary School, Dover CT15 5LR

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 good progress throughout the school, especially in writing, but some of you could do even better.
- Those of you who are learning English as another language quickly learn to understand it.
- You enjoy school and like the interesting topics that you study, as you told us.
- 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, for example by being 'buddies', although some of you could be more involved in thinking for yourselves in lessons
- Adults take good care of you.

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

- Make sure that your work is not too easy and especially to help you in science.
- Use assessment information more to plan lessons and help you know how to improve your work.
- Involve more teachers in making sure all lessons make you think and help you to do better.

Yours sincerely

Sue Orpin
Lead inspector