

Alfriston School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114385
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	378850
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	David Marshall

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	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Lloyd
Headteacher	Liz Trevis
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Marshall

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent five hours observing teaching, which included visiting nine class lessons and a number of smaller teaching groups. In all, six teachers were observed. In addition, discussions were held with different groups of pupils, six governors, the headteacher, most staff members and a number of parents and carers. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at information about pupils' performance and progress, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, school policies and curriculum planning documents. In addition, questionnaires from 48 parents and carers, and others from staff and pupils, were analysed.

Information about the school

Alfriston is a smaller than average village school which occupies a Victorian building, with some modern additions such as a purpose-built hall. The school has its own swimming pool, a large playground and the use of the village recreation ground. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The majority of pupils do not live in the village itself.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below that found nationally. In 2011, the school met the government's 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

- Alfriston is a good school. Pupils achieve well because the school is well led and managed. Parents and carers are very pleased with all the school does for their children. The school is not outstanding because there are variations in the quality of teaching that mean that in some lessons, not all pupils are enabled to make the progress they could.
- Pupils' progress and their achievements have been above those expected for their age for almost every year since the last inspection. Although the pupils leaving the school in Year 6 in 2011 made good progress overall, the standards they achieved in English and mathematics were average, due to the nature of the cohort. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children make an excellent start to their schooling.
- Teaching is good and continuing to improve. Very occasionally, learning is less successful when the pace slows in lessons. Teachers know pupils' academic development well through the good use of assessment, and pupils' progress is tracked carefully.
- Behaviour is good and attendance has improved markedly since the last inspection. Attendance is now well above average. The strategies introduced to manage behaviour have ensured that pupils are aware of what is expected of them.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and how to keep pupils very safe. A rigorous focus on the quality of teaching, an effective programme of performance management and utilisation of professional development opportunities have successfully guided the school through a difficult period of staff changes. The school has rightly identified the sharing of best teaching practice amongst staff as a strategy for further enhancing pupils' progress. The exciting curriculum enables pupils to enjoy an extensive range of activities that promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by July 2013, focusing on:
 - improving the pace of learning in some lessons
 - extending opportunities for staff to observe the best practice in the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils join the school with skills and knowledge that are similar to those typical for their age, but there are many variations within the small cohorts. Throughout the school, all groups of pupils achieve well and they are particularly well prepared for the next stage of their education. As the school records show, and inspection evidence confirms, all pupils, regardless of their ability, are making at least good progress. Effective organisation and careful assessments enable children to make excellent progress quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This exceptional start is generally built upon very well so that by the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment is above average. Pupils' standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average. Last year's national assessments for pupils in Year 6 showed them achieving average standards overall in English, but above average in reading, and making good progress since their results in Year 2. Potentially higher-attaining pupils were enabled to achieve above average standards.

In mathematics, pupils' past work and work within lessons illustrate their growing confidence in basic and more advanced number calculations and problem solving. Throughout the school, the pupils' work on display and in their books clearly shows the good progress they make in subjects across the curriculum, especially in art.

Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This stems from the high priority the school gives to meeting their needs. By ensuring consistent and high quality help from well-qualified teaching assistants wherever it is needed, the lower-attaining pupils and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable make good progress. Any gaps between them and their peers are closed effectively.

Parents and carers expressed a high level of satisfaction in the progress their children make and are appreciative of the efforts the school makes to involve them in their children's learning. Inspection evidence fully concurs with the parents' positive views.

Quality of teaching

Inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching over time has been typically good and has led to pupils' good achievement. While small inconsistencies remain, teaching across the school is effective and no inadequate teaching was observed

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during the inspection. Teachers are well prepared and plan interesting activities within the overall plan for the curriculum. The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel that their children are taught well. Most pupils who completed questionnaires, or who talked to inspectors, are positive about the quality of teaching and are interested in a wide range of subjects.

Teaching is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are always active and highly engaged in their learning because all staff successfully match activities to their needs. There is a very good balance of teacher-led activities and those that are initiated by the children themselves.

There are many examples across the school of good and skilful teaching where the pace of learning is maintained with timely reminders to pupils of what needs to be achieved and where confident, well-thought-out activities promote pupils' interests and skills. For example, in the Year 1/2 class, pupils carefully considered how they might have felt if they had been the mother of Moses and had to put him in a basket and put it in the water. They responded thoughtfully about these feelings and shared them with each other. Other specific initiatives, such as the school's detailed programme to help pupils who are behind with reading to catch up, are successful.

Throughout the school, staff have excellent strategies to manage behaviour. Teachers regularly use paired talk which supports pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively and also their social development through negotiating ideas. This was very evident in the Year 3/4 class, where the pupils' responses to 'find a better word than...' in instructional writing were very positive and lively. Marking is helpful and supports the pupils' next steps in learning. Staff keep detailed records of pupils' progress and use them to ensure pupils are well challenged in most lessons.

The impact of the well-planned curriculum on the quality of teaching is clearly evident. Teaching of basic skills is good, is applied across the curriculum, and contributes to the pupils' good progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are taught effectively across the curriculum. Teaching assistants are deployed well. Thanks to the very effective work of the special educational needs coordinator, extra teaching expertise for pupils who have difficulties in reading and mathematics is well utilised and helps specific pupils catch up. Pupils often contribute effectively to this process and suggest extra pointers for success before they begin the activity. Parents' and carers' views that teaching is good are confirmed by the inspection.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is good and all evidence shows that this is typical over time. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying but say there is no bullying of any description in the school as they are all friends. They are confident that if any issues or concerns around bullying did arise, they would be dealt with swiftly and sensitively; one older pupil observed in discussion, and all others agreed with her, 'The teachers are always there for us.' Throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic learners. Attendance is well above average, as pupils

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enjoy all their time at school.

The school has devised a broad curriculum that also focuses on pupils working with others. This strategy was demonstrated particularly effectively in a session where pupils in the Year 5/6 class worked out mean, median and mode. The enthusiasm and ability they showed in working together in doing this were impressive.

Pupils show very caring attitudes to each other and know there is always someone they can turn to in moments of difficulty, either academic or personal. They acquire a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils were keen to show how much they enjoy the responsibility of the school council or being school ambassadors and house captains. The school council is justifiably proud of the input it has made to influence changes. Almost all parents and carers report that standards of behaviour in the school are high and, without exception, they agree that their children are kept very safe at all times. One parent said, reflecting the views of many, 'We love the school. The staff are friendly and approachable and the atmosphere in the school is always welcoming. We have recommended the school to others and will continue to.'

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior staff and governors know the school's strengths and what needs to be refined further very well. Their careful monitoring and clear self-evaluation, and their implementation of initiatives to enthuse pupils, have kept the school moving forward in spite of staff absences, and have also contributed to pupils' good progress. These factors illustrate the school's good capacity for continuing its improvement. Leaders are strongly committed to the continuing professional development of all staff and ensure that it is closely related to the school's development planning. Documentation is impressive and the evaluation of the contribution to the school's work is honest and accurate. The governing body's contribution is outstanding, with it being fully involved in this process, challenging decisions and requesting explanations where necessary. It holds the school to account in a challenging but supportive manner.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well, contributing to their consistently good behaviour. The school's curriculum is good. The Early Years classroom area is very well resourced and organised. Although the outdoor area for the Reception class is excellent and used very effectively to support learning, the lack of a canopy restricts learning on many days when the weather is bad. Children thoroughly enjoy learning in this outside area, where activities are carefully enhanced by the use of rich language, such as signs and questions, and by linking the tasks carefully to those taking place indoors. This good practice continues right through the school.

Rigorous attention is paid by managers at all levels, which ensures the good quality of safeguarding and care for the pupils. This includes detailed procedures through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. Pupils' safety and well-being

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are paramount at all times, ensuring that the school is a very safe and supportive place to be. The governing body and senior managers, supported well by all staff, are effective in tackling discrimination should it occur and in ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils and across all aspects of the school's work.

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 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alfriston School, Polegate BN26 5XB

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school when I visited you recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and would now like to tell you what I found out about your school. I agree with what you told me – Alfriston is a good school. These are the main reasons why I judged the school to be good:

- You make good progress because of good teaching and you try hard at all times. I was impressed that most of you knew what to do to make your work even better.
- I saw that you are very appreciative of the many activities you experience both during and after school.
- Your headteacher and staff do a good job in organising and managing the school.
- You all thoroughly enjoy being in school. Many of you try very hard to help others. For instance, the school council and ambassadors do a great job.
- You behave well, work hard and listen very carefully to your teachers – all of this helps you to succeed.
- All the adults in the school look after you very carefully. They always make sure that you get help if you need it.

I have agreed with your headteacher and teachers that even in a good school, there are some things that will help it to become even better. I have asked them to make sure that no matter which class you are in, all your lessons are as good as the best and keep you actively involved at all times. I know your teachers are all working to be the best they can be and we want them to learn good practice from each other as well.

You can help too by listening carefully and taking note of what your teachers say. Then you will all make even better progress in your learning.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall
Lead inspector

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