

North Downs Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124949
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359803
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

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	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paula Morgan
Headteacher	Jan Steel (interim headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 16 teachers and talked to parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked in particular at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered the responses in 143 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- the quality of the teaching and whether it meets the needs of all pupils, particularly the more-able, and challenges them to do their best
- how successful the new senior leadership team is in creating a cohesive whole-school ethos with a consistent curriculum across the three sites
- the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage in enabling children to have the best possible start to their education.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. It was formed in September 2010, when The Acorns Infant School, which operated on two sites, closed and amalgamated with Brockham Primary School. The school was then given a new name and shortly afterwards a new governing body was formed. The school occupies three sites, two to three miles apart from one another. The Brockham site has one-form entry intake for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception class and for pupils in Years 1 and 2, with an extra class in Year 2 because of an unusually high number of pupils in that year group. At that site, there is two-form entry intake for pupils from Year 3 to 6. The Betchworth and Leigh sites each have two mixed-age classes for pupils from Reception to Year 2. A substantive headteacher was due to take up her appointment from 1 September 2010, but decided not to take up the post. The former acting headteacher of The Acorns Infant School then took on the post of interim headteacher of the amalgamated school.

The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is considerably lower than usual. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and currently none speaks English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion with statements of special educational needs is also average. An external provider manages the on-site nursery on the Betchworth site and this is subject to separate inspection.

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

This is a satisfactory school where the pupils are happy and well cared for. They develop good personal qualities and behave well. One parent commented, 'All the staff, from the headteacher down to the server assistants, really care about the children.' This is representative of several comments recognising the good care and support for pupils.

While teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory overall, there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. There are examples of good lessons, but in some the pace is too slow and pupils are sometimes passive learners. The interim headteacher and her team have begun a rigorous programme of classroom visits to drive up the quality of teaching and learning. This has already had some impact. For example, pupils now consistently evaluate the quality of their written work and this helps them to understand the progress they are making.

Leaders and managers have begun to improve assessment systems to ensure that the progress of each pupil is carefully tracked and analysed. This tracking benefits those with special educational needs and/or disabilities especially, enabling appropriate support to be put in place so that they make progress in line with others. However, not enough is done to ensure that all teachers make full use of the tracking data to provide extra challenge for all pupils, especially for the more-able, to enable them all to do as well as they can.

Activities offered to children in the Reception Year and the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 differ between sites, so that progress is inconsistent. This inconsistency has the strongest impact on Reception Year children who are taught in different styles and make uneven progress overall in their learning. As a result, children are not always prepared to best effect for further learning in Year 1.

Leaders and managers know their school well and are rigorous in their self-evaluation. They have made changes which, though sometimes unpopular, have been necessary to enable pupils to make better progress. The school has met some of the recommendations from the last inspection. For example, information and communication technology is now used effectively across the curriculum. However, pupils' attainment, though fluctuating between years, has not shown a secure pattern of improvement. Overall, the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning to at least good overall in order to raise attainment, especially for the more-able, by:

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- raising the level of challenge for all pupils
 - improving the pace of learning in lessons, with more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning
 - ensuring that the school's tracking of pupils' progress is used more effectively in the classroom to enable all pupils, but particularly the more-able, to receive appropriate support and work which is tailored more accurately to their needs.
- Ensure that the curriculum for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception Year and for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is standardised across all three sites to enable pupils to make progress at a similar rate.

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

Pupils show their enjoyment of school through their above-average attendance and report that they like their teachers and are happy at school. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. Both boys and girls make progress in line with national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with others, because their needs are identified early and met through targeted and effective support. Where lessons engage pupils and provide them with responsibility for their own learning, the pupils make faster progress than in others where they are passive learners. For example, in one lively lesson for mixed-age Year 1 and Year 2, pupils actively used their imagination to devise a group story about Paddington Bear. They went on a local walk, noting features that Paddington would notice, and used the experiences to come up with vivid similes which they shared with one another. The lesson provided exciting opportunities for pupils to do their own research and discuss their findings with others. All too often, however, lessons do not fully exploit the pupils' natural curiosity and in these cases they make slower progress. A scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the school shows that teachers' expectations are not always sufficiently high to enable the more-able to do as well as they can, particularly when tasks lack sufficient challenge.

Pupils, including the youngest, understand the school's aims, 'Enjoy, Learn, Achieve TOGETHER', reporting that they get on well with one another and that there is no bullying. Pupils are friendly, confident and polite to visitors. They understand the importance of diet and exercise and report that the sports clubs help them to stay fit. They feel safe in school and know the adults will support them if they have any concerns. Behaviour is good, particularly in lessons, and this reflects the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility within the school and are looking forward to the impact that the new 'buddy bus stops' will have on playground friendships. Overall, pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the wider community. The sound grounding pupils acquire in the basic skills prepares them adequately for the next stage of schooling.

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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons and there are warm relationships in the classroom. Teachers plan lessons well so that pupils know from the start of the lesson what they are going to learn and, at the end, have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt. In the best lessons, teachers set a brisk pace and use challenging tasks to stimulate pupils to think for themselves. For example, in one Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils were busily engaged in measuring length, weight and force. Their learning was rapid, because they were all engaged in discovering facts for themselves, rather than being told. The work was carefully organised, ensuring that each group of pupils, whatever their needs, were given a good level of challenge. However, this is not the case in every lesson and teachers do not always use the assessment information about pupils' current attainment to provide them with tasks with the level of challenge that best fits their needs. In some lessons, too little is expected particularly of the more-able pupils and in these cases they make less progress. Sometimes, pupils spend too long sitting passively on the carpet listening to the teacher and in these cases the helpful teaching assistants are under-used and pupils sometimes become restless and fidgety.

Activities to enrich the basic curriculum are interesting and wide-ranging. The variety of clubs, trips and visits to places of interest are appreciated by the pupils and are important in broadening their horizons. The pupils report that they particularly value the residential trips, which are available to each year-group from Year 3 to Year 6. The curriculum has a

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sound focus on the basic skills, but does not always provide all pupils with sufficiently challenging tasks. The curriculum for pupils from the Reception Year to Year 2 is not yet consistent across all three sites, so that currently some pupils do not enjoy as exciting and stimulating a range of activities as others. Plans are in hand to address this.

Pupils are cared for well and given good support. The needs of children most in need of support are known and these children are given very good support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are looked after well and, in many cases, they catch up with their classmates. Transition arrangements are good at each stage of the pupils' schooling. Leaders and managers plan carefully to include children from the different sites into whole-school activities wherever possible and to create a whole-school ethos, so that at the end of Year 2, those from the two smaller sites are ready to move confidently to the larger site.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

'In September, the headteacher hit the ground running and has pulled a strong team together at all three sites. I feel the school could have an exciting future.' This and other comments from parents and carers reflect the strong commitment to improvement that is the hallmark of the leadership of the interim headteacher and her team. The leaders and managers have lost no time in planning much-needed changes and beginning to implement them. The governing body shares their determination to raise pupils' attainment and bring about school improvement. Even though the governing body has been in existence for only a matter of weeks, it has demonstrated an organised approach and a commitment to playing a full part in future school improvement. Minutes of governing body meetings show that there is already a determination on its part to challenge the school and to put raising attainment for all pupils at the forefront. Leaders, managers and the governing body are tackling with energy the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. However, it is early days in terms of the impact of actions to improve pupils' outcomes and, as a result, the ambition and drive for improvement of leaders and managers are judged to be satisfactory rather than good. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination adequately, ensuring that all pupils make satisfactory progress. The headteacher and governing body ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust and that procedures for vetting adults who work with children are consistent and effective.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily, ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of different faiths, festivals and ways of life. Leaders and managers work in

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sound partnership with parents and carers, keeping them informed about their children's progress and creating a whole-school ethos through the school's informative website and through regular newsletters.

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	2
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

The children enter the Reception Year from a wide variety of local nurseries and pre-school providers. Induction arrangements are effective and the children quickly settle into one of the three Early Years classes across the three sites. The school builds and maintains good relationships with parents and carers. Children in the largest site enter a separate Reception class, while children in the other sites join mixed-age classes. What all classes have in common is good care and welfare, which results in sociable children who develop good personal qualities and who are kept safe. The parent of one Reception Year child commented, 'My child is doing well and there is a happy environment.' Children enter the Reception Year with levels of language and number skills which vary, but which are generally above those expected for their age, and with other skills which are at the expected level. By the end of the year, they have made satisfactory progress in acquiring new skills. The provision varies across the three sites and the curriculum is currently not common to all, so some children have more play-based activities than their peers at other sites. Children who have more opportunities to choose their own activities tend to make faster progress in their learning than those who are expected to sit passively on the carpet for long periods listening to the teachers. In the best activities, adults develop children's interest through questioning to promote higher-level thinking, asking the children, for instance, such questions as 'How do you know that?', rather than taking the child's first response as sufficient. Occasionally, however, adults do not extend the children's speaking through sufficiently well-targeted questioning and this inhibits faster progress and better overall achievement in their learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator is new

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to the post and is a member of the senior leadership team for the school as a whole, as well as for the Reception Year. Together, leaders and managers have made a positive start to bring together the curriculum and raise the quality of teaching.

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 slightly higher proportion of parents and carers than is usual returned questionnaires. Almost all those who returned questionnaires or who spoke to inspectors agreed that the school keeps their children safe. Most agreed that their children enjoy school and that the school encourages them to lead healthy lives. The findings of the inspection are that these aspects are good. Most parents and carers agreed that teaching is good. The team found that some teaching is good, but overall it is satisfactory. A small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school takes sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns, or informs them fully about their children's progress. The team found that the school engages satisfactorily with parents and carers and keeps them adequately informed about their children's progress. One parent commented, 'I think the communication is great, via email or letters home, or a chat with a teacher.'

A small minority of parents and carers had concerns about the quality of the new leadership and management following the amalgamation of the two schools. A similar proportion did not agree that the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of schooling. The findings of the inspection are that the new leaders and managers have made a promising start on the changes necessary to improve pupils' attainment and prepare them fully for the next stage of schooling. Overall, the very large majority of parents and carers were happy with their children's experience at the school. One parent commented, 'My child loves coming to school and likes his teachers very much.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Downs Primary 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 400 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	49	67	47	5	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	45	76	53	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	20	78	55	33	23	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	23	88	62	15	10	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	46	32	84	59	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	30	72	50	23	16	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	32	84	59	9	6	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)	27	19	77	54	16	11	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	25	86	60	12	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	20	81	57	12	8	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	19	72	50	16	11	7	5
The school is led and managed effectively	36	25	67	47	25	17	7	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	30	84	59	10	7	3	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

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.



24 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Downs Primary School, Brockham, Betchworth RH3 7LA

Do you remember when three visitors came to your school recently to watch you learn and play? We enjoyed visiting all three sites. Thank you for making us so welcome and telling us your views.

- Your school gives you a satisfactory quality of education, which means it does some things well, but some things need to be improved.
- Your school keeps you safe and healthy. You behave well and pay close attention in lessons. You are polite and respectful to visitors.
- You love your clubs and trips and visits. We enjoyed hearing about your residential trips.
- You make satisfactory progress and leave school with results which are very much like those of pupils in the country as a whole. Those of you who find work quite easy do not always get the chance to do your very best work. We have therefore asked the adults to give all of you more chances to take charge of your own learning and do more for yourselves. We have asked them to make sure that you are always given tasks that suit your individual needs and challenge you to do your best.
- We have also asked your school to make sure that the younger ones among you learn through play as much as possible and have the chance to do the same exciting activities as others, whichever site you may be at.

You can play your part in helping your school become better. Make sure you work hard. If you do not understand anything, make sure you ask an adult straight away.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Natalia Power

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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