

Portslade Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114413
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	357532
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Steer
Headteacher	Dawn Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed 14 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body and staff. They talked to parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, reports from the School Improvement Partner and data on pupils' progress. They analysed questionnaires received from 163 parents and carers and 25 staff.

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

- How effectively the school is raising attainment and improving the progress of boys generally, and improving progress in writing of both boys and girls.
- How effectively the school is ensuring that teaching consistently promotes improved learning and progress.
- How effectively the leadership at all levels is monitoring progress and driving through school improvement.
- How effectively the school is furthering the skills and personal development of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Portslade Infants' School is a larger-than-average school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include a wide range of learning, behavioural and emotional needs, is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in four Reception classes. The school has Healthy Schools status and the Artsmark Gold award. It operates a daily breakfast club before the school day. During the last year there have been several staffing changes, including at leadership level.

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

Portslade Infants' School provides a satisfactory education, with improving levels of attainment and progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress by enthusiastically developing knowledge and a good range of skills. In Years 1 and 2, pupils reach average levels of attainment and make satisfactory progress by the time they leave school, although those with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress at a faster rate, mainly as the result of targeted interventions provided for these pupils. One of the school's strengths is its success in promoting good personal development and a level of care and support which ensures the personal well-being of all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents and carers recognise these qualities and testify to the inclusive nature of the school, a typical comment being, 'I cannot express my gratitude enough for all the support and help.'

The headteacher leads an improving school well, in challenging circumstances, given the substantial turnover of staff at all levels during the last year. She has succeeded in imparting her vision and high expectations to a supportive governing body and staff. Several strategies have been adopted to raise attainment and improve progress. In particular, the school has developed a curriculum which engages pupils more and encourages them to develop independent learning skills. One parent talked about 'subjects being taught in such an imaginative and creative way'. There are improved systems for identifying and supporting those pupils in danger of underachieving. As a result, attainment in writing is improving and boys' attainment and progress are beginning to catch up with those of the girls, which historically has been higher in the school. Pupils are on track to meet appropriately challenging targets.

Most teachers have a greater awareness of what pupils can achieve, and pupils are enthusiastic about the range of topics and activities in lessons. However, teaching remains inconsistent in quality. Sometimes, teachers have insufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve or do not manage the range of learning opportunities effectively. This leads to a fall-off in pace, or insufficient challenge for more able pupils in particular, so that they do not achieve as well in lessons as they should. Although the school has rigorous systems for assessing pupils, teachers use that assessment inconsistently in the classroom. Pupils do not always understand what they are trying to achieve, and do not get sufficient feedback on exactly how they can reach their targets.

Attendance is average, but most pupils enjoy school, feel safe, behave well, cooperate well in lessons and enjoy taking on responsibility, for example in the school council. Many develop as confident and articulate individuals, because the school encourages them to express themselves, and many have above-average speaking skills.

The headteacher is determined to increase academic success to match the strengths in personal development. She carries the major responsibility for monitoring but other

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leaders and managers, including subject leaders, are now much more effectively involved in monitoring and promoting improvement. The good leadership means that several of the strategies, for example to share good practice in teaching and learning, are now becoming more embedded. The result is that the leadership's drive is showing positive results in improving provision and progress. This is confirmed by the considerable lessening of underachievement evident in recent assessments of pupils' progress. Therefore, the school has a satisfactory and developing 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 section5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in order to raise attainment, especially in writing, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations, particularly of more-able pupils, so that they benefit from a greater level of challenge
 - improving teachers' management of independent learning, so that all pupils are engaged constructively all of the time.
- Use assessment more effectively in lessons, including the better application of success criteria and feedback, so that pupils have a clearer idea of how they can improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children join Reception with skill levels often just below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. They make good progress to reach average of attainment by the time they join Year 1. Progress is then satisfactory, although improving, as pupils move up through the school. Attainment in mathematics is higher than in English, although attainment in writing is improving. Inspectors observed pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities making good progress in intervention groups. Pupils' learning is good when teachers provide pupils with a range of well-paced and challenging activities which engage their interests fully and enable them to make good progress in developing a range of skills. This was evident, for example, when pupils were given a range of interesting problem-solving activities in mathematics. In lessons where the learning activities were less well managed, or the tasks were either not clear to pupils or did not provide more-able pupils in particular with sufficient challenge, pupils made satisfactory progress. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well and receive good support from the school.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of additional activities, such as the dance, choir, French, art and samba clubs. Pupils showed an impressive level of knowledge when talking to inspectors about the qualities of various foods and what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils feel safe and confident that any untoward behaviour will be dealt with effectively by adults, and apart from occasional over-boisterous activity in the playground, they feel that behaviour is good. Behaviour has improved because the behaviour policy has become more rigorous and consistently applied. Current levels of attainment in the key skills of literacy and numeracy mean that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next phase of education, although the transition procedures are well developed, so that pupils

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are confident when moving on to their next school. Social development is strong, as pupils collaborate well in class, and pupils have opportunities in assemblies and elsewhere to reflect on moral and ethical issues.

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	2
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	2
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	3
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?

Teaching and learning are inconsistent in quality. This is partly due to a recent major turnover in staffing with the result that there are several new members of staff who have not yet had much opportunity to share in the best classroom practice which is evident in some lessons. In those successful lessons observed during the inspection, the teachers had high expectations, encouraged pupils to learn actively, deployed other adults well to support less confident learners, and monitored the range of activities well. These were features, for example, of a mathematics lesson in which the teacher focused on one group of pupils by using the breathing and eating habits of whales to make a 'fun' activity out of developing numeracy skills, while other pupils worked independently on computers or were engaged in reading activities, monitored and supported where appropriate by a teaching assistant. However, too much of the teaching is still satisfactory. Usually, this was evident when teachers did not make the 'success criteria' or learning outcomes clear to pupils, so that they did not understand why they were doing particular activities or what the next steps in learning were. This sometimes results in pupils, particularly the more

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able, finding the tasks too easy, and they are not moved on to more challenging tasks quickly enough. It slows the pace of learning unnecessarily.

The curriculum has some innovative features, which encourage pupils to make links between different subjects and develop a range of skills around a particular topic, such as animal wildlife. It leads successfully, for example, to pupils practising a wider range of writing styles. The school makes good use of enrichment opportunities, such as a visiting theatre group, to broaden pupils' experiences. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils enjoy visits, such as that to the Sea Life Centre.

Pupils, parents and carers all agree that there is good care and support for pupils. The school works hard to encourage parents and carers to make pupils attend school regularly. There are good links with a range of outside agencies that provide effective support for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Inspectors saw expert support being provided during the school day for parents and carers from minority ethnic groups, in order to support their children's learning at home. Well-developed links with neighbouring schools mean that pupils move on confidently at the end of Year 2. A particular success has been the creation of small intervention groups which have helped those pupils identified as underachieving to make good progress in improving their English and mathematical skills. The popular daily breakfast club gives a good start to many children before they register for morning lessons.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's strategies for improving attainment and progress are having a significant impact. This represents good leadership, and is largely the result of the headteacher's high expectations and determination to move the school forward. There is accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, while planning for improvement is focused well on the priorities. Members of the governing body are knowledgeable and increasingly active in holding the school to account. , Subject leaders are committed to improvement, and becoming increasingly influential in raising achievement and consequently teaching and learning is improving. The school has strong links with parents and carers through involving them in their children's learning by means such as invitations to parental and carer workshops, shared learning experiences with their children, and encouragement to attend assemblies and other lunchtime activities. Links with other schools provide good opportunities, for example, in professional development for staff, and the schools cooperate in providing specialist help, such as a learning mentor.

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However, apart from fruitful links with a local school which provides support for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties, the links have thus far had a limited impact on pupils' academic progress.

Pupils get on well together, with no obvious discrimination, and the school works hard to be inclusive. It succeeds in making the school a happy environment, although inconsistencies in teaching mean that some more-able pupils are not always given the opportunity to learn as much in the classroom as they should. There are robust safeguarding procedures, for example to ensure safe use of the internet. Safeguarding procedures are monitored and reviewed regularly, while adults are well aware of their responsibilities and appropriate procedures. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Pupils' involvement in the school and local community is a strength, but links beyond the local area are less developed, and pupils have a limited awareness of people's lives, beliefs and values in other parts of the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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

Children from a range of backgrounds and pre-school experiences settle quickly into the Reception classes, which are coordinated well by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader. Progress in writing is slower than in other areas, but children can explain confidently to visitors what they are doing and learning. Children work well both independently and in small groups by choosing from a range of learning opportunities. Occasionally, staff over-direct children engaging in these activities, although children make good progress both indoors and in the large and well-resourced outdoor learning area. Children were observed happily and constructively engaged in a variety of activities, such as painting the school fence, manufacturing games out of plastic piping and learning numbers through playing traditional playground games. There is thorough assessment of children's progress, which

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helps to then establish what children can achieve in the next stage of learning. Although some of the teaching staff are relatively inexperienced, expectations are high enough to ensure that children make good progress. The result is that, although progress in writing is slower than in other areas, children leave Reception with a good level of basic skills. Strong links with pre-schools ensure a good transition into Reception. Children feel very safe and well cared for, as confirmed by parents and carers, who are encouraged into the school to support their children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a high percentage of returns of the Ofsted questionnaire by parents and carers. Overall, they are very supportive of the school, often commenting on the good quality of care and support for their children. Typical comments were: 'The school has a very close, warm feel, despite it being quite large,' and 'My daughter loves coming to school and even at weekends and holidays is disappointed when it's not a school day'. Parents and carers are confident that their children are happy to be at school, feel safe and enjoy the range of activities. A few parents and carers did not feel that the school manages behaviour well. While the inspection team acknowledges these concerns, it found that behaviour is generally good, and that when there are instances of over-boisterous or inappropriate behaviour, usually in the playground, the school deals with them effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Portslade Infants' 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 163 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 355 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	98	60	62	38	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	80	49	75	46	3	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	63	39	90	55	7	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	66	40	77	47	13	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	78	48	77	47	7	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	81	50	74	45	6	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	42	80	49	8	5	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)	54	33	82	50	7	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	36	88	54	10	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	29	85	52	20	12	9	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	32	89	55	10	6	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	74	45	73	45	11	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	51	69	42	8	5	1	1

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 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Portslade Infants' School, Brighton BN41 2LA

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed visiting lessons, talking to you and finding out about your school.

Portslade Infants' School gives you a satisfactory standard of education. Those of you in the Reception classes make good progress, getting lots of fun things to do, which help you learn well. Not all of you in Years 1 and 2 do as well in your work as you should. Your work is now improving, especially in writing, mainly because your headteacher and other staff work hard to help you, and most of you also try hard in lessons. Most of the time you behave well, you feel safe in school, and we agree with what you told us about being looked after well in school. You get on well with each other in lessons. You also enjoy the activities you join in outside lessons, such as the choir and clubs. Occasionally, some of you find the work rather easy in lessons, although you enjoy the way in which your teachers give you different things to do while learning new knowledge and skills. Sometimes you are not quite sure what you should be doing next and need more ideas on how you can improve your work. Your headteacher knows this and is working hard with other staff to give you more opportunities to learn well.

In order to turn your satisfactory school into a good one, in which you can learn even better, especially in writing, we have asked the school to:

- make sure that all of you, and especially the cleverest of you, get work from your teachers which is not too easy and keeps you fully occupied
- make sure that your teachers always give you enough information in lessons on how you can improve your work and do the best that you can.

By continuing to work hard, you can help your teachers make the school even better.

Yours sincerely

John Laver

Lead inspector

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