

Handcross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125932
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	363998
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Liz Kounnou

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	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Aylett
Headteacher	Gillian Pedersen
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
School address	London Road, Handcross Haywards Heath RH17 6HB
Telephone number	01444 400291
Fax number	01444 401176
Email address	office@handcross.w-sussex.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons, during which five teachers and a student teacher were seen teaching. Meetings were held with governors, teachers and pupils. Inspectors observed other aspects of the school's work and looked at pupils' books, work displayed around the school, school policies, documents related to safeguarding procedures, assessment information and records. Inspectors analysed questionnaires responses from parents and carers (77), pupils in Key Stage 2 (60) and staff (16); all of which helped to inform the inspection process.

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

- The extent to which the curriculum has been tailored to promote high standards and greater independence for all pupils from Reception to Year 6 since the previous inspection.
- The achievement of all groups of pupils in the mixed-age classes in English and mathematics to determine pupils' rates of progress as they move through the school.

Information about the school

This is a small school with a much higher proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities than is typical. The majority of this group have been assessed with moderate learning difficulties, and a few have emotional and behavioural needs. Most pupils are of White British heritage but several other ethnic backgrounds are represented. Pupils come from a mixture of urban and rural communities. All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding school has moved from strength to strength since the previous inspection. There is no complacency and school leaders at all levels consistently seek further improvements to improve school life and the outcomes for all pupils. The capacity for sustained improvement is excellent. This is due to the rigour of school procedures for checking the success of planned initiatives, its proven track record and exceptionally clear direction from the headteacher who involves all staff as much as possible. Pupils love coming to school and attendance levels are high. They find the excellent curriculum inspiring because they have a great deal of choice and independence. Lessons and clubs are packed with things to do. Pupils' independence has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Staff pay great attention to ensuring that both boys and girls are highly motivated, the outdoor classroom is well used for this purpose. Learning in mixed age classes is well managed. Given the high levels of self-direction, particularly in the afternoons, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Year 6 pupils showed especially mature attitudes when managing the props and costumes they brought to school in order to film and star in adverts they designed and scripted. Pupils admire one another's work and are just as eager to explain the success of others as they are proud to talk about their own work.

Typically, when pupils start school in the Reception class, their skills are below those expected for their age; by the time they leave in Year 6, many reach above average standards. Consistently good progress in English and mathematics all through the school is due to consistently good teaching in these subjects which benefits pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. Teaching of topics is often inspirational. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to the strong focus on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' diligent attitudes to learning are evident in the efforts they make to present their English and topic work really well. They know their targets in English and what they need to do to improve their work over time. However, in some lessons, pupils are not always fully aware of precisely what they need to achieve that day in order to succeed. Nevertheless, overall progress is good. In the excellent Early Years Foundation Stage classroom, children get off to a great start partly because their parents and carers are fully involved and know the next steps for learning for their own children.

Governors have access to an exceptional range of accurate information about the school that emerges from high quality systems for checking how well the school is doing. Pupils really appreciate that their voice is heard in the school and that they can make a difference, including sharing their views with governors. Pupils feel completely safe at school and have high levels of trust in all the adults. Each child chooses a named adult to support them. Consequently, support for the pupils whose circumstances make them most

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vulnerable is extremely strong, reflecting the outstanding levels of care provided for all pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring all groups of pupils understand precisely what they need to do in each lesson and how to judge their own success.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

A significant minority of pupils reach the higher levels in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. Achievement is good overall. Tailored programmes take account of pupils' varying abilities so that all groups of pupils do well, including those from minority ethnic groups. Gifted mathematicians are taught separately in Years 5 and 6. During the inspection, they responded very eagerly to the challenge of creating an algebraic formula to find the sum of the numbers within any regular shape within a one hundred square. Their skill was evident in the explanations they gave to support their ideas. There was a tremendous buzz in the room as they discussed their ideas together and great satisfaction when they succeeded. In some year groups, more than half the pupils are identified with special educational needs. They are equally well cared for, often taught in small groups with particular attention to their emotional needs, and they make good progress. However, pupils are not always fully aware of their next steps in learning. Year 1 and 2 pupils learned how to use time connectives in their writing when creating a list of instructions. They showed a particular aptitude for simple punctuation and legible handwriting, but were less clear about the choice of words they needed. Highly motivated Year 3 and 4 pupils organised themselves and selected from a range of well-prepared topic activities linked to their Rainforest theme. Each day they are responsible for ensuring their work is of good quality, but do not always know how to make this judgment. For example, when using chalk and oil pastels to make careful observational drawings of tropical fruit, they were not clear what criteria to use to judge their own success. Nonetheless, eye-catching artwork is displayed all around the school. Specialist teaching in music results in high levels of achievement. In Years 5 and 6, pupils were galvanised into enthusiastic participation working out what syncopation might mean as they got to grips with a samba rhythm.

A high level of independence and responsibility permeates school life. Pupils encourage one another in the drive for healthy eating by nominating a fellow pupil for the healthy eating award. If chosen, the successful pupil has the pleasure of wearing 'the healthy food hat' all day. The whole scheme was invented by the pupils and is typical of the many ideas they gleefully suggest and staff facilitate. The wide range of well-attended sports clubs are provided mainly at the pupils' request. Peer mediators are the first port of call to resolve any disputes that arise at break times; just one of the many responsibilities that pupils engage in with pride.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Inspirational activities characterise the topic work so that pupils of all abilities are fully absorbed in history, geography and all other subjects. For example, to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world, topic work covers Indian culture alongside geographical ideas of India as a superpower. Pupils talk readily about the memorable experiences they have at school and take great pride in their own responsibilities. Great care is taken to ensure pupils in the mixed-age classes develop their skills at a good rate as they move through the school. Topic work is organised to take account of the wide range of ages and abilities. The work enables pupils themselves to select the areas they will cover and the research they will do within certain parameters. Often the activities are set up in the outdoor spaces as well as in the classrooms. Most require some hands-on investigation. Pupils are trusted to do their best and live up to these expectations because they know that teachers' assessments will accurately judge whether or not they have achieved as well as they should. Teachers do not consistently provide precise guidance in lessons to enable pupils to make their own assessment of their learning; consequently they sometimes do not know how to do their best. Teachers use assessment effectively in English and mathematics to ensure that pupils are doing well against a broad range of aspects in each subject. Care, guidance and support are exceptional, including good partnerships with various groups to expand the provision available. The school provides a calm and trusting environment in which all pupils can thrive.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's success results from accurate analysis of how well pupils are doing and a shared ambition and commitment to even greater achievement. There is a clear and consistent focus on improving achievement for all pupils. Actions are taken to minimise any differences in outcomes for different groups so that equality of opportunity is outstanding. This is because of the successful work that has been done to even out any inconsistency in the achievement of different groups, and the exceptionally rigorous monitoring, together with pupils' outstanding personal development. In addition to specialist provision for gifted and talented pupils, the curriculum and school's resources are well selected to motivate boys as well as girls and to celebrate diversity. School leaders fully understand the context of the school community and successfully promote curiosity about diversity in the wider community. The school holds an International Schools Award and promotes community cohesion well. For example, links are well established with an urban British school and a rural school in Uganda.

Governors make an exceptional contribution to the school. They are fully involved in many aspects of school life including the school's robust, extensive and up-to-date arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety. They play a full part in the school's own safeguarding committee, which regularly checks that everything is as it should be. There are good links with parents and carers. The school recognises that it can improve communications further in responses to the questionnaire for this inspection.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although widely variable, many children start school with very low attainment in communication, language and literacy skills. They get off to an excellent start due to the exemplary assessment procedures that ensure staff very soon know precisely which skills each child needs to develop next. Parents and carers are fully informed of the assessment information and encouraged to support their children throughout this stage. Ongoing assessment and careful recording follow the progress of each child, with a detailed report for parents and carers provided half-way through the year so that they are kept up to date with the next steps in learning for their child. Meticulous planning and excellent organisation for all areas of learning create a calm atmosphere and safe environment for learning. Procedures for ensuring children's safety are exemplary. Most of all, there is a lot of fun. The outdoor area is packed with newly planted pots of flowers and vegetables for the children to nurture and measure as they grow. Children laugh with delight as they sit astride a hobby horse and ride around an obstacle course for 'horse riders'. They have to count in 10s for every successful jump and there are shouts of glee when they leap over the poles without knocking them down. Scores are quickly noted on the clipboards before the next contestant sets off. The Farm theme is evident in most of the activities, counting pairs of eggs, and mucking out the stables as well as caring for the crops. Children make good progress throughout the year in each area of learning. However, by the end of the Reception Year, the proportion reaching the national average in language skills for their age is still below average.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire and their views are mostly favourable. The overwhelming majority say that their children enjoy school. Most of the children agreed with this statement in their own questionnaire, and our evidence shows that they have a lot of fun in all the classes. A few parents and carers would like more information relating to their children's progress. We found that this was typical of that provided in most primary schools, but that the children themselves were not fully aware of their own success in lessons. The concerns of a very small minority of parents and carers regarding pupils' progress and the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour were not borne out by the inspection evidence. This included observations in classrooms, around the school, discussion with staff and pupils and scrutiny of relevant records. This shows that pupils make good progress and behave exemplarily, and that care, guidance and support for pupils are excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Handcross 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	56	33	43	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	60	26	34	5	6	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	45	35	45	7	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	42	36	47	7	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	44	57	30	39	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	47	36	47	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	68	22	29	2	3	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)	30	39	39	51	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	48	32	42	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	40	36	47	8	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	45	35	45	6	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	42	37	48	6	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	45	39	51	3	4	0	0

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



20 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Handcross Primary School, Hayward's Heath RH17 6HB

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our visit. You worked extremely hard in the lessons we saw and behaved excellently. We found your comments very helpful. You told us how much your teachers trust you to do your best. Your school is outstanding and your teachers are helping you to make good progress. There are very many outstanding things in your school.

These are some we liked most:

- The way that you enjoy talking about each other's work as well your own.
- Your suggestions for making the school better, such as the 'healthy food hat'.
- You make your own decisions about a lot of the work you do each day.
- The way that you behave responsibly in and out of doors when you are choosing your jobs for the topic in the afternoons.
- Your vibrant art and design work on display all around the school.
- The responsible way that Year 6 pupils carry out all their duties.
- The exciting activities you do in topic work, such as creating Egyptian mummies and pyramids and filming your own adverts.
- The way that staff and governors ensure that you are very safe and exceptionally well cared for at school.

To help the school become even better, we have asked the school to help you understand exactly what you need to achieve in every lesson so that you can judge your own success more clearly. You could help by trying really hard to check your work carefully to make sure you have done everything you should.

Thank you again for talking to us about your school and making us welcome. We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Liz Kounnou

Lead inspector

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