

# Sussex Road Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118286
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379585
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Hodge

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	387
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Matthew Trigg
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare Dudman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Sussex Road Tonbridge Kent TN9 2TP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons taught by 13 staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including safeguarding, and pupils' workbooks. They held discussions with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and senior staff. Questionnaires from 123 parents and carers, 24 staff and 100 from pupils were analysed to help 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.

- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve, particularly in their communication, language and outdoor learning.
- Whether all pupils make good rates of progress, especially in their writing.
- The extent to which pupils' science and information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop systematically.
- How well the governing body supports school improvement.

## Information about the school

The school is bigger than many primary schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are of White British origin and there are a few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher was appointed who took up the post in January 2010. There is a breakfast club that runs each morning. The school has achieved a number of awards, including those for the promotion of pupils' healthy living, environmental awareness and their artistic appreciation.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Sussex Road provides a good standard of education. The school has improved since its previous inspection. Its strengths lie in the way it develops pupils' personal qualities, broadens their interests and, more recently, in how pupils are helped to make better progress in their academic work. As one pupil aptly said, 'we have fun but we also have to work harder now'.

The headteacher, supported by staff and members of the governing body, has succeeded in raising the level of pupils' academic attainment. This is reflected in recent upward trends in national tests results. By using a wide range of accurate self-evaluation procedures, involving staff, parents, carers, pupils and outside professionals, the school usually identifies and acts on the right priorities. Good levels of teamwork and staff morale, the systematic teaching of values and the provision of better resources are notable successes. Given this track record of improvement, the school has good capacity to improve further.

In mathematics, pupils develop their calculation skills well and apply their knowledge to solve practical problems effectively. In English, pupils are willing writers, although their spelling is sometimes weak and some of their writing lacks flair. Not all are confident to speak at length or in depth in more formal discussions to widen their vocabulary. Children get a good start in the Reception classes, where they settle quickly, gain confidence and develop secure levels of basic skills in their communication, language and number. The good start is built upon through the school and pupils make good progress. However, progress does vary between classes or year groups on occasions, often linked to small differences in curriculum provision or in the quality of teaching. Both are typically good, although some recent changes, prompted by trying out different assessment methods in class, for example, are not fully embedded. Nonetheless, pupils reach average attainment levels by the time they leave the school and achieve well from their starting points, particularly in their mathematical work. Pupils' scientific and ICT skills develop systematically to the levels expected when they reach Year 6, and the use of computers figures regularly within other lessons. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also achieve well. The few pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language also achieve well as the school provides good levels of support.

Pupils' high level of attendance is a positive indicator that they enjoy school, feel listened to and safe. They appreciate that staff take the time to help them improve their work. The school's good promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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development encourages generally good levels of behaviour in classes, which only dips occasionally when teachers take too long to explain things or if some activities are less exciting or relevant than others. Pupils adopt healthy living principles, reflected in one pupil's comment that, 'My eating habits must have changed because I now enjoy eating Brussel sprouts!' A wide range of activities and after-school clubs, theme weeks and participation in national music events broadens pupils' horizons.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve pupils' attainment in writing in Years 1 to 6 by:
  - giving them more guidance about how to spell accurately
  - ensuring that they have exciting and relevant reasons to write
  - developing their speaking skills to enhance their spoken and written vocabulary.
  
- Ensure that all teaching helps improve pupils' learning and progress consistently in Years 1 to 6 by:
  - making explanations short, sharp and to the point so pupils can get down to activities more quickly
  - planning activities that are more relevant to pupils' experiences and interests
  - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching focuses more on how pupils are learning than how teachers plan or use resources.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

As children start school in Reception, their language and number skills are often below those typical of their age. By Year 6, they generally reach at least average levels, indicating good achievement from their starting points. Mathematics is a strength through the school, reflected in recent higher than average test results. Targets for the coming year indicate pupils are on track to achieve higher results next year. Pupils enjoy their lessons, particularly when the subject matter is really interesting. For example in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils enjoyed finding out how pollination occurs, aided by using computers. In Year 3, pupils enjoyed improving their multiplication skills by the challenges set using a game of snakes and ladders to improve their speed and accuracy of number work.

In English, pupils' spelling varies in accuracy and their creative writing can lack originality. Some pupils are clear and articulate speakers, but this is not always the case. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and skilful support helps them keep up with their classmates. Those few pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language also make good progress as they benefit from additional support in classrooms and in work tailored to their needs.

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Pupils enjoy being involved in the life of their school, through the school council or in acting as monitors for other children. Many said they like their new ‘Come dine with me’ opportunities to talk with senior staff while eating lunch. Those that attend the morning breakfast club say that they like the start of the day and think the breakfast is ‘great’. Links with the local community and further afield in the United Kingdom and abroad help give pupils a good understanding of others from differing backgrounds, and combined with their good achievement, mean they develop the right skills and attitudes for their next stages of education.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Since the previous inspection, a greater proportion of teaching is effective. That said, there are small variations, which sometimes cause pupils’ progress to slow. Teachers foster good relationships so there is a conducive atmosphere for working and pupils develop their own understanding of how to learn effectively. Lessons are usually engaging and practical, but teachers occasionally spend too much time in explanations so pupils become restless. Activities are usually pitched at the right level making good use of a varied and broad curriculum, which includes systematic teaching of basic skills and values. Increasingly the use of technology helps to enrich pupils’ learning. Other aspects of the curriculum are not yet ‘finely tuned’ as some pupils say they are not always clear about the relevance of some activities or how it can be applied in their day-to-day lives. An enticing theme of pirates and tea stained ‘parchment’ to write secret messages upon, fostered a keenness to write, but this ‘sparkle’ is not always a widespread feature. Responses from pupils’ questionnaires

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

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indicate they feel helped to improve their work and teachers' marking confirmed that clear, regular comments give good guidance to them in how to improve their work. Teaching assistants are well briefed and supportive, which aids pupils' learning.

Good levels of care, guidance and support enable pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good progress and feel valued. They are confident that adults will help them should they need it, whether it is to do with their learning or if their circumstances make them vulnerable in some way. Pupils are sensible enough to realise that the behaviour of some of their classmates occasionally falters, but most say that these occasions are rare and dealt with well by the school. Links with others beyond the school, regular training and the support of parents and carers through having a dedicated parent and carer support adviser, ensure that pupils feel supported effectively. Induction procedures to local secondary schools are effective.

*These are the are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since the previous inspection, staff and senior leaders report that there is a greater sense of drive and ambition, fostering good teamwork, more levels of involvement in decision-making and in coaching, including for those in positions of responsibility. Systematic monitoring of teaching is a regular feature, although some observations by senior leaders tend to focus more on how teachers plan and/or use resources than on pupils' learning which means not all lessons are yet consistently at the level of the best. A variety of approaches, such as teaching philosophy or 'values', help pupils reflect upon their own learning. External support has been harnessed to good effect in aiding the school's accurate self-evaluation procedures. Members of the governing body have supported the school through some significant changes in personnel and in building projects. The governors challenge the school effectively. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses despite some recent changes in their roles and responsibilities. Staff vetting procedures are carried out to a good standard, along with good systems to ensure that pupils are kept as safe as possible. These include regular risk assessments, good use of technology and keeping up to date with safer recruitment training. They also ensure that the school does not tolerate any forms of discrimination. Senior leaders monitor the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, to ensure that they make similar progress as their peers and thus promote equality of opportunity effectively. The school's procedures to promote

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community cohesion are effective, reflected in the good levels of responsibility and tolerance shown to others, pupils’ involvement in the local community and their environmental awareness. Pupils’ knowledge of others with differing backgrounds and beliefs is promoted effectively through well-developed links with schools both in this country and abroad. The school has good links with others in the community to provide additional resources to aid pupils’ learning such as visiting local businesses and schools. Regular meetings for parents and carers, reports home, regular ‘drop-in’ events and a frequently updated website enhance links between home and school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start in the Reception classes. They settle quickly and benefit from good links with their feeder schools and settings, which enable staff to develop a good understanding of children’s different needs and abilities. Teaching of basic literacy, communication, letter sounds and number is skilful and imaginative. For example, children really enjoyed identifying initial letter sounds of ‘p’ singing a song called ‘silly soup’ and pretending their imaginary soup contained all the objects that they had identified. Number skills are taught both directly and within independent activities such as throwing balls into numbered tyre rings. A wide range of activities foster children’s manipulative skills while role-play corners help them act out simple roles and responsibilities such as being ‘Mum’, ‘Dad’ or ‘carer’. Others enjoyed ‘painting’ their outside playhouse with water to develop their physical skills. Other outside activities, while interesting, are not quite as enticing as those provided within the classroom. This means that occasionally some children, usually boys, do not always fully engage with the activities available to them. On some occasions, children are left too long so that activities lose their initial interest in promoting their learning. Teachers are conscientious in ensuring children stay safe and promote hygienic



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routines effectively before morning snacks or after playing in the sand. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed effectively. Staff have a good understanding of the areas of learning and statutory requirements. They ensure that checks on children are regular and informative so that future activities are tailored specifically to their needs. Parents and carers indicate they are very pleased with their children's start to school.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 an above average response to the Ofsted questionnaire. The vast majority of parents and carers indicated they are pleased with the way the school has improved since the previous inspection. Those questionnaires which contained comments were equally divided between those praising the school and its efforts and those voicing some concerns or areas for improvement. Common themes to positive comments were the way the school cares for its pupils, the good start children have in the Reception classes and with some saying the school was 'fantastic'. Others were less enthusiastic, and a common theme for improvement was communication and more information on pupils' progress. Some felt behaviour was an issue. Inspectors found that the school had the normal range of opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school and be informed of progress. There are informative letters home, a website and regular opportunities for parents and carers to 'drop in' to the school or attend more formal meetings. Senior leaders recognise, however, that for some this may not always work as well as they would like and are keen to seek ways of improving their lines of communication where possible. The pupils' behaviour, while not perfect, is usually good around the school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sussex Road Community 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 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 387 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	51	53	43	3	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	68	55	51	41	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	23	19	69	56	24	20	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	25	59	48	25	20	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	43	35	69	56	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	34	28	71	58	13	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	32	76	62	3	2	2	2
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)	36	29	62	50	9	7	2	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	32	26	70	57	10	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	20	66	54	12	10	8	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	22	62	50	11	9	8	5
The school is led and managed effectively	36	29	68	55	7	6	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	51	41	63	51	4	3	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Sussex Road Community Primary School, Tonbridge, TN9 2TP**

Many thanks for your welcome when we visited your school. We think yours is a good school which wants to get better. Here are some particular things we found out.

- You make good progress in your learning most of the time and your attainment in many subjects, especially the important ones of reading and mathematics, is at the level of most schools. Some of your writing could be even better.
- Your information and communication technology (ICT), science and other subject skills develop well. Your musical trip to Birmingham sounded great.
- Most of you behave well and you told us you enjoy lessons.
- Your attendance levels are high – keep it up and well done!
- The school cares for you well, particularly those who find learning hard or who are learning to speak English.
- You know lots about keeping healthy and keeping fit with exercise.
- Keep up your excellent 'Eco' work and I hope you keep the new 'Hobbit house' clean and well used!
- Those I spoke to and your questionnaires said nearly all of you feel safe in school, but I know some of you think the behaviour of some classmates could be better.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are proud to work at the school and are continuing to find those other ways of making it even better where possible.

We have asked school leaders to improve two particular aspects of the school to help it get even better.

- To give you more help in your writing so it is really interesting to read.
- To make lessons as fun and interesting as possible so you all make good progress through the school.

You can help too by trying to keep up your good behaviour and in giving your ideas about how the school can keep improving.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge  
Lead inspector

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