

Midhurst C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125988
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	381165
Inspection dates	28—29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Calvin Pike

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4—11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edward Roberts
Headteacher	Matthew Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	11—12 November 2008
School address	Ashfield Road Midhurst GU29 9JX
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Age group	4—11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons, taught by eight teachers and a higher level teaching assistant. One observation was carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors met with a member of the governing body, with staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at self-evaluation documentation, safeguarding information, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies. They analysed questionnaires from 101 pupils, 20 members of staff and 94 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 achievement and progress of lower and middle attaining pupils in both key stages to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- The school's effectiveness in reducing levels of persistent absence by a small percentage of pupils.
- How well pupils are helped to understand different cultures in the United Kingdom.
- The extent of good teaching and its impact on improving pupils' progress.
- The impact of the changed leadership structure and leaders' effectiveness at all levels in bringing about sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Midhurst Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average -sized school. The number of pupils has increased over the last two years, partly as a result of local reorganisation which has resulted in pupils moving to the next stage of learning at the end of Year 6 rather than at the end of Year 5. Pupils come from a predominantly White British background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average, especially those with a statement of special educational need. The main group consists of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that found nationally. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage at the start of the Reception Year. The school has links with a school in Kenya. There is a nursery, and children's and family centre provision on the school site which is not managed by the governing body, and therefore was not part of this inspection. The school has a Healthy Schools award and Travel Mark.

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

Midhurst Church of England Primary is a good school. Pupils enjoy school and report that the support from all adults around them helps them feel safe.

Pupils are enthusiastic to learn and behave well. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average in English and mathematics, although slightly weaker in writing. This is an improvement on the previous year's results. This is because weaknesses in writing skills have not previously been identified early enough. School action has begun to reduce differences in outcomes between subjects and the success rates of pupils of different abilities. Along with higher attainers, middle and lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities now achieve well. Increased opportunities for active learning introduced last year have made the curriculum good and pupils have responded well. These opportunities build pupils' confidence and allow them to develop good workplace skills and habits. Attendance is average and improving due to the school's introduction of a traffic light warning system which has had a positive impact on reducing the persistent absence of a small group of pupils.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and excellent relationships with their pupils. Lesson planning is well structured and resourced. Assessment information has been improved over the last year and is used well in preparing lessons. Teachers set targets regularly and encourage pupils to use them to reflect on how well they are doing. All teachers mark work regularly with encouraging commentary but the quality of feedback on how to improve is inconsistent. This limits the extent to which pupils can evaluate, set targets for their own work and become independent learners.

The headteacher has successfully introduced a new management structure which distributes responsibilities to a wider group of leaders and managers. Together with the progress made by pupils in the school in the last year, this gives the school good capacity to sustain further improvement. Those involved are clear about their roles but there is not enough emphasis on evaluating the impact of initiatives on progress. The school has extended its professional development programme linked with other local schools. This has had a positive effect on improving standards and teaching quality. Self-evaluation is thorough, focused on individual pupils and accurate in most areas. New arrangements to identify children's attainment on entry to Reception have highlighted that initial assessments are not fully secure and that the information they provide is not used consistently to challenge children well. Staff and the

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governing body have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body is well organised and offers effective support and challenge to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making more secure assessments of pupils' attainment on entry
 - using this information to plan activities that build effectively on children's knowledge and skills
 - providing a wider range of questioning and encouraging children to take a more active part in their learning.
- Ensure all teachers use assessment information to encourage greater independence in learning and, in their marking, show pupils clearly how to improve their work.
- Strengthen the roles of the senior leadership team and middle managers by sharpening their focus in monitoring the impact of initiatives on pupils' progress, particularly in raising standards in writing and in the Reception class.

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

Pupils enjoy school and respond positively in lessons because, as a Year 6 pupil commented, 'They make it fun!' Pupils make good progress, particularly when they are actively involved in their learning and in evaluating each other's work. This was evident in a Year 6 lesson on developing writing skills. All groups of pupils applied themselves well in writing individual versions of the next stage of the story because the teacher set out clearly what was needed and referred well to pupils' work effectively to encourage powerful descriptions. When pupils fed back to their partners on their work they reinforced their understanding and reflected well on the next steps they would need to take to improve. Similarly, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils made fast progress in calculating and solving money problems because the teacher applied the tasks to real life contexts and pupils enjoyed this practical work.

Pupils behave well in class, in outdoor learning and around the school because expectations are high. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very effective, enabling these pupils to make good progress. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language settle well and make good progress because classroom help and extra one-to-one support is focused well on their individual needs. Other pupils, supported by teaching assistants, are sometimes given too much help to complete the task set because teachers do not always make clear how the support should be differentiated to enable all pupils to make good progress. Improvements in achievement, particularly in Key Stage 1, result from close analysis of outcomes and tighter systems to monitor pupils' performance during the year.

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The school has tackled variability in achievement between groups well and concentrated effectively on ensuring good progress to the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that their concerns are dealt with quickly. Attendance is average but not higher due to a small minority of pupils who are persistently absent. This proportion was halved last year following the introduction of a traffic light system; current data show continued improvement. Pupils take on a range of roles and responsibilities. Elected representatives lead the school council, supported by class councils. Year 6 pupils act as ‘teacher monitors’ and support younger pupils and their class teachers. All year groups raise funds for charities and participate in partnership activities with local businesses. Most pupils are aware of different cultures as shown in their topic work, displays and their regular work with a school in Kenya. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in learning other languages as they start French in Year 1. Pupils have a good sense of how to stay healthy, as is reflected in the school’s Healthy School award and the high numbers involved in sporting activities. Pupils are prepared well for their future economic well-being. This is demonstrated in improved standards in mathematics and writing, good punctuality and improved attendance. It is also evident in their reflections on an increasing range of external visits and links with other schools that supported the school in gaining its Travel Mark.

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	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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The enhanced curriculum strongly encourages more active approaches to learning.

¹ 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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High standards and a range of regular performance experiences in music enrich pupils’ experience as do opportunities to learn French. Jointly planned, adventurous topic work based on pupils’ interests, a range of linked trips and visitors to the school add to pupils’ enjoyment in learning. Membership of the Rother Valley Schools group adds extra value to school provision, such as workshops in a range of subjects for gifted and talented pupils. The impact of these initiatives is evident in pupils’ strong speaking and reading skills. Even so, the school is working hard to apply this work more consistently to improve pupils’ writing skills.

Close partnerships with external agencies and the good care and guidance support pupils well, including those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. There are close links with medical and social services, the school’s attendance officer and other community groups. The welcoming approach of reception staff enables pupils to settle in quickly and happily. Transition arrangements between year groups are good and supported by effective record-keeping and communication. Parents and carers affirm their appreciation of these arrangements in responses to questionnaires.

The school’s good teaching is mirrored in pupils’ rates of progress in learning. Teachers’ planning is linked well to overall developments in the curriculum which ensure progression in learning through the school. Lesson plans are well structured and developed from pupils’ interests. A science investigation lesson in Year 3, for example, triggered pupils’ enthusiasm as it was based on close observation, questioning and recording of the making of popcorn. Teachers use the school’s excellent learning resources and outdoor areas effectively to stimulate pupils’ interests. Teachers and support staff help pupils to know their next specific targets and to use them to reflect on how well they are doing. Older pupils are aware of the levels they are working at but this is less common for younger pupils.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher’s clear vision is driven by a determination to raise achievement and meet pupils’ personal and social needs. It is supported well by the new senior and middle leaders and has been shared effectively through established routines, meetings and self-evaluation processes. These have led to effective changes to the curriculum which have improved provision and raised the quality of teaching and attainment. Leaders, and increasingly class teachers, use the improved information

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available well to plan their work. Regular monitoring accurately evaluates teaching quality and informs a clear training programme to develop teachers’ skills further.

The school’s commitment to promoting equal opportunities is evident in its provision for pupils of different groups. Strongly emphasising the Christian faith, sterling efforts are made to raise pupils’ understanding of traditions and cultures outside the school. Growing international links and a good understanding of its local community affirm that community cohesion is promoted well. This is supported by feedback from local groups and business that have benefited from the school’s input. Nonetheless, there are only satisfactory opportunities for pupils to learn more of the United Kingdom culture and circumstances beyond its immediate area. Governors bring a wide range of expertise. They support the school well, offer good challenge in relation to the school’s strategic direction and are growing in confidence to challenge information that is now available concerning pupils’ achievements.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The site is well maintained and secure. The school has been successful in widening links with outside agencies to promote pupils’ welfare and support. For example, work with the children's centre has resulted in the headteacher joining its committee and the school being accredited 'full core offer' as part of the extended schools agenda. In addition, the school has developed its work with parents and carers by providing a mathematics workshop but recognises that more opportunities remain to engage them in their children’s work.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school in Reception with a wide range of abilities. Although levels of skills and knowledge are mainly in line with expectations, a number enter below

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and others well above these expectations. Typically, cohorts come from a number of nurseries or with no pre-Reception experience and have most difficulties in communication, language and literacy. Children learn reception routines quickly and make fast gains in their social development. They make satisfactory progress and the majority reach the early learning goals expected of them by the end of their time in Reception.

The curriculum provision is interesting and gives a range of stimulating learning opportunities. Children enjoy arts, crafts and musical activities. There is a satisfactory balance of planned adult-directed and child-initiated activities, both indoors and outside. However, in implementing these plans, some adult-led work offers limited opportunities for pupils to give more than one word answers and some support is overly directive. Child-initiated activities give children opportunities to explore and use their imagination well but are not always linked to the main focus of planned learning, reducing the opportunity for teachers and assistants to assess how well children are learning. Children are safe, happy and get along with each other well. Links with outside agencies where support is needed are good.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Leaders have good knowledge of the children’s personal needs but initial assessments of children’s learning are not always secure. Staff are aware of this and are currently implementing a new assessment and recording system to improve this area of their work, as well as developing links with home or previous nurseries to check children’s individual strengths and understanding.

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

Just under half of parents and carers returned questionnaires. This is above the average nationally. Almost all respondents were very positive about Midhurst Church of England Primary and the vast majority felt that it helps their children to enjoy school and keeps them safe. A few parents and carers raised concerns. These included the extent to which the school helps them to support their children’s learning and informs them about their children’s progress. Inspectors judged communication between home and school to be good but agreed that it would be helpful to enhance guidance to parents and carers in supporting their children’s learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Midhurst C of E 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	61	33	35	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	69	29	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	39	41	49	52	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	46	49	52	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	59	37	39	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	44	47	42	45	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	50	44	47	3	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)	41	44	50	53	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	44	47	48	51	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	43	46	49	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	36	55	59	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	62	31	33	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	55	59	35	37	2	1	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	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).

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.



30 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Midhurst C of E Primary School, Midhurst GU29 9JX

Thank you very much for your welcome to us when we visited your school recently. We found that you behaved very well and were keen to learn. We were very pleased to see your kindness to each other and good manners. Thank you to those who gave the time in your busy day to speak to us.

Yours is a good school. Your headteacher leads the school well and, like other adults, wants it to improve. Teachers and teaching assistants work hard to provide you with a good education. Staff care a great deal about you and the progress you make in learning. They make sure you are looked after well. We are pleased that attendance is getting better. All of you can help by attending school regularly.

We have asked the staff to do a number of things to help your school become even better. We would like you all to do as well in English as you do in mathematics. You can help by practising writing at home. We have also asked teachers to use the information they have about the progress you are making to give you greater challenges, to encourage you to be more independent in your learning and to show you clearly how to improve your work .

The children in Reception settle in well and are very happy. They obviously enjoy learning and make satisfactory progress. We have asked that reception staff get a clearer understanding of what the children can do and use this more quickly to help them make better progress.

Yours sincerely

Calvin Pike
Lead inspector

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