

Little Common School

Shepherds Close, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN39 4SQ

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Over time, pupils have not made the progress they should, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils.
- While there is some very good practice, marking does not always identify ways to improve and not all teachers check to see if pupils are responding to guidance.
- Teachers' expertise in questioning is patchy.
- Opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills to find things out for themselves are missed.
- Pupils are unclear about their longer-term targets for improvement in mathematics and how important the subject is in everyday life.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and members of the governing body have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Together, the headteacher and her deputy have raised expectations. Consequently, pupils' progress is accelerating and attainment is rising in all subjects.
- Teams across the school are very focused on improving teaching, which is strengthening rapidly.
- There are good opportunities for training, coaching and courses to develop teaching and management skills.
- The school is a welcoming place where pupils feel very safe and well looked after. Strong and trusting relationships underpin pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons and examined pupils' work, especially in English and mathematics. Some observations were joint visits with a member of the leadership team. Inspectors also observed and talked with pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspection team held meetings with staff, pupils and five members of the school's governing body. One meeting with pupils was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for some pupils to read to an inspector. There was also a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 94 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and discussed parents' and carers' involvement in school life with senior leaders. They also analysed 63 staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Julie Sackett	Additional inspector
Terence Cook	Additional inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional inspector
George Logan	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. Of the few from minority ethnic groups, some speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- Overall, the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below that found nationally. The number supported through school action is above average but the number supported by school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Close to two thirds of teachers have part-time contracts.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - making sure teachers plan and provide work that challenges pupils of all abilities
 - improving the use of questioning to probe pupils' understanding, develop their responses and increase their participation
 - identifying pupils' next steps in learning, in marking and checking that they are responding to guidance
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to investigate and solve problems on their own
 - developing pupils' understanding of how mathematics is used in everyday life
 - making sure pupils are clear about their longer-term targets in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the school with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. In the Reception classes, they learn quickly and make good progress in their early reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has been broadly average because pupils' progress as they move up the school has been variable. However, the school's reliable data, pupils' work and lesson observations show attainment is rising. Pupils now make consistently good progress in English and much better progress in mathematics.
- Standards and progress have been better in writing than in reading and mathematics. In recent phonics (the sounds that letters make) checks, results were below the national average. The school has taken effective action to tackle these weaknesses.
- Teachers' skills in the use of phonics have improved as a result of training and individualised coaching. Reading is given high priority in all classes and pupils' progress is tracked very closely. Those in danger of not meeting expectations receive high-quality support. Pupils are on course to do much better in the next phonics check and in national tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils of all ages clearly enjoy reading and routinely discuss favourite books and authors.
- There has been an effective focus on deepening teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics. The school knows precisely where pupils' progress in mathematics has faltered, most notably in Year 5. Leadership of the subject has been strengthened and carefully targeted support has enabled pupils to catch up. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve their challenging targets.
- Much-improved systems for checking pupils' progress and well-being ensure that everyone has an equal chance of success and is well prepared for secondary school. This includes pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding to provide additional teaching support for pupils who need it. There is still a gap between the progress of those pupils who qualify for the additional funding and their classmates, but it is closing quickly and their attainment is rising.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is checked thoroughly and shows that most now make good progress. Teaching assistants know the pupils they support in lessons very well and help individuals to think things through for themselves and gain independence.
- Pupils are keen to do well. In lessons, most were seen to be working diligently and concentrating on the tasks in hand. They enjoy working together with partners and in groups so that they learn to listen to others, share ideas and consider the quality of their own and others' work. In a Year 6 English lesson observed, the well-structured, flexible grouping of pupils inspired in-depth discussions about the impact of war and resulted in some excellent imaginative writing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There are examples of good and outstanding teaching in many subjects but there is still too much variation in practice.
- Where teaching requires improvement, it is frequently because teachers expect all pupils to complete the same work in the same amount of time. This frustrates both the most-able and the less-able pupils. Too often, teachers give long explanations to the whole class. When this happens, opportunities are missed for pupils to use what they have learned to find things out for themselves. Progress slows, particularly for the most-able pupils, because, although they already understand, they have to continue listening to the teacher. This is most evident in mathematics.
- Where teaching is good or better, a range of well-designed resources support learning that is well paced. The tasks set are imaginative, varied and appropriately demanding. Expectations for work and behaviour are very high and met. Pupils understand the purpose of their work and see

how it is relevant to being successful in life. Teachers question expertly to probe and accelerate understanding, and help pupils think deeply and grapple with complex ideas. Marking clearly identifies the next steps in learning and teachers check that pupils are taking their advice on board.

- This highly effective practice in questioning and marking is not consistent across the school. In addition, pupils are not always clear about their longer-term targets for improvement in mathematics and do not see how important mathematical skills and methods are in everyday life.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire felt their children were taught well. While teaching is not yet good, these views do support the evidence that teaching is improving.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Most parents and carers, staff and pupils agree with this.
- Pupils are thoughtful, polite and considerate. They show respect to others and make a positive contribution to the school's calm, orderly environment. They show high regard for all staff and these positive relationships encourage pupils to seek help if they need it.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and talk confidently, for example, about why social network 'chat rooms' might pose dangers to children.
- Broadly average attendance is improving. This reflects pupils' strong sense of belonging and their pride in their school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and a well-developed sense of right and wrong. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and, should they occur, staff deal with them effectively. The school tackles any form of discriminatory behaviour promptly.
- Pupils are kind and supportive of others. They appreciate that people are different and show tolerance in their day-to-day relationships. Pupils from all backgrounds work together sensibly and play happily and safely.
- Opportunities to take responsibility around school, for example in organising fundraising events, provide purposeful ways to extend pupils' moral and social development. Pupils enjoy a very good range of clubs and trips that extend their experiences of the wider world.
- The school has a clear and well-thought-through behaviour management policy that is usually implemented well by staff. Sometimes, where staff share a job and a class is taught by more than one teacher, there is a lack of continuity in expectations.

The leadership and management are good

- Following a major review of staffing, the headteacher and governors have improved leadership at all levels and established a leadership structure that is sustainable.
- The headteacher gives clear direction to the work of the school. She has high expectations of staff and effective teamwork is driving improvement strongly. She is well supported by an ambitious senior team intent on raising achievement further.. Staff are committed to giving pupils the best education. The most recent data show that pupils' progress is accelerating and attainment is rising in both English and mathematics.
- Leaders at all levels are focused sharply on improving pupils' learning. The quality of teaching is checked regularly through observing lessons, regular short visits to classrooms and examination of pupils' workbooks. Where teaching requires improvement, robust procedures are in place to improve teachers' performance.
- Information from lesson observations and the school's data is used to hold teachers to account and to identify which pupils need additional support to improve their learning.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and balances the development of essential skills and

creativity well. The rich variety of after-school activities deepen pupils' enjoyment of learning and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. The breakfast and after-school club offer high-quality care and provision.

- The school has worked hard and successfully to improve communications with parents and carers and support their involvement in their children's education. Governors have established a parents' forum which gives parents an opportunity to express their views and talk through any concerns that they may have about their children's education. Feedback from Parent View is very positive overall, with most parents and carers who took part saying they would recommend the school to others.
- The school has a very open and productive relationship with the local authority. Some effective training has been provided to support the school in raising pupils' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are very committed to the school and ensure that pupils are safe and very well cared for. Governors have a good overview of the school's performance, including pupils' progress. They have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and are fair and rigorous in linking pay awards to the quality of teachers' work. Governor training is relevant and up to date, for example in ensuring that the school meets all safeguarding requirements. Governors utilise resources in the best interests of pupils. For instance, pupil premium funding is used to provide tailored support for eligible pupils, and governors keep a close eye on their progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114429
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	403240

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	618
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Wilkinson
Headteacher	Linda Appleby
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
Telephone number	01424 842297
Fax number	01424 846697
Email address	info@littlecommon.e-sussex.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

