

Park Mead Primary School

Upper Dicker, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 3QP

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There is not yet enough good teaching to secure pupils' good progress over time.
- Frequent changes in staffing have frustrated leaders' efforts to improve the quality of teaching more rapidly.
- Work is not always matched accurately to pupils' needs, so sometimes it is too easy or too difficult. Marking does not always help pupils to improve their work and pupils do not always get time to respond to comments.
- The teaching of calculation skills and the use of practical resources have not been sufficient to enable pupils to solve problems successfully.
- Leadership and management require improvement as teaching and achievement have not improved quickly enough to be good.
- There has not been sufficient time for recently appointed subject leaders to establish their roles and make an impact on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Behaviour requires improvement because a few pupils do not concentrate well enough when the pace of the lesson is not sufficiently brisk.
- Arrangements to involve parents and carers in their children's learning are at an early stage.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent improvements in aspects of teaching mean that pupils' progress has begun to accelerate. Improved standards at the end of Year 6 in 2011 were sustained in 2012.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have established a positive ethos and a clear sense of direction.
- Children make good progress during the Reception Year because teaching is good.
- The role played by the governing body has developed rapidly and they have an accurate picture of development priorities.
- Pupils say they feel safe. Attendance rates have improved and are now in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, including one joint lesson observation completed with the executive headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority representative, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in addition to several letters from parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work and analysed a range of documents and policies, including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records, safeguarding documents and a sample of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium in this school is below the national average. (Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in Years 1 to 6. There is a Year 1/2 class, a Year 3/4 class and a Year 5/6 class.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2012 and the head of school was appointed in January 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information fully to set work for pupils which is not too hard and not too easy
 - the pace of learning in lessons is sufficiently brisk to maintain pupils' involvement and good behaviour and to enable them to make faster progress
 - marking shows pupils what they have done well and how to improve their work, with time regularly set for pupils to respond to teachers' comments
 - pupils are taught different calculation strategies to help them to tackle number problems successfully
 - pupils are supported and encouraged to use practical resources to help them to understand mathematical concepts.
- Improve and strengthen the effectiveness of the school's leadership by:
 - establishing and developing subject leaders' roles so that they have a greater impact on raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching
 - increasing parents' and carers' involvement in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because too few pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Variations remain in pupils' progress in different year groups and subjects. Historical inadequacies in teaching and past underachievement mean that there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills which hamper their progress. The school is now successfully addressing these gaps, and attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average.
- There are gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding and particularly in their ability to use different strategies to tackle calculations. The school has begun to address this and evidence shows that pupils' progress in mathematics is accelerating. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to use practical resources to support and develop pupils' understanding, especially when they are finding activities difficult.
- Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 has been variable because of inconsistencies in teaching, and was below average in 2012. In response, leaders have established a systematic approach across the school to the teaching of the link between letters and sounds (phonics). As a result, pupils' progress in reading during Key Stage 1 is improving. Pupils are becoming more confident when reading and are increasingly willing to 'have a go' when tackling unknown spellings in their written work.
- In 2012, attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 increased so that it was close to the national average, with an above-average proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. School information shows that pupils' attainment in 2013 is on track to improve further.
- In the past, too few pupils attained the higher levels in English and mathematics because teachers' expectations of what pupils can do were not high enough. Recent improvements in aspects of teaching, including higher expectations and increased challenge for the most able pupils, mean that more pupils are on track to attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013.
- Generally, children's skills and knowledge when they join Reception Year are as expected for their age. Effective teaching builds on children's starting points so that they make good progress and reach above-average levels by the end of Reception.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is improving and they make similar progress to their peers.
- The achievement of the few pupils who are eligible to benefit from pupil premium is variable. In 2012, when just one pupil in Year 6 was eligible, attainment in English was half a national curriculum level above other pupils in the school, and in line with other pupils in the school in mathematics. Currently, a number of eligible pupils in the school have complex needs which affect their progress. The school has put a range of mechanisms in place to support these pupils and is working closely with agencies to ensure that these pupils are supported appropriately. As a result, the gap between the attainment of these pupils and other pupils is closing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching across the school is too inconsistent to secure pupils' good achievement. There is not yet enough good teaching, despite school leaders' determined and concerted efforts. This is due largely to the high staff turnover.
- Sometimes assessments of pupils' needs are not used accurately enough, so that the work set is too easy or too hard; the pace of learning is not always fast enough and marking does not always give pupils information about what they need to do to improve or the time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Aspects of teaching have improved as a result of well-focused staff training. For example, teachers' subject knowledge has improved; expectations of what pupils can do are higher and pupils' books are regularly marked. Workbooks show that the quality of pupils' work and their

progress have accelerated over the last term in English and mathematics.

- Short, sharply focused phonics lessons, known in the school as 'Phonics Bursts', have been established across the school to improve pupils' reading and writing skills. This is ensuring a consistent approach and a faster pace of learning. For example, in Reception Year, confident subject knowledge and effective teaching, with good levels of challenge for the most able children, are helping them to become increasingly confident in reading and writing.
- The school has made a good start in addressing gaps in pupils' calculation skills over the last two terms so that pupils are becoming more confident when tackling number problems. For example, in a Year 1/2 lesson during the inspection, the teacher effectively demonstrated how practical resources, such as a hundred square, can be used to tackle addition problems, while in a Year 3/4 lesson, the interactive whiteboard was used very successfully to show pupils how to use a number line to help them to solve subtraction calculations.
- Teaching assistants play a positive role in supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They are sensitive to pupils' needs and are increasingly able to adapt activities to help pupils progress well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement because some pupils find it difficult to behave consistently well. A few pupils have struggled to adapt to increased expectations and do not always fully comply with teachers' expectations in lessons, especially when they are not fully involved in activities. This was confirmed by pupils, who told the inspector that behaviour has improved but that a few pupils occasionally interrupt their learning. While some parents who completed Parent View considered pupils to be well behaved, the majority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour.
- Inspection evidence shows that behaviour is improving and relationships are good. Most pupils have responded very well to increased expectations and have welcomed the more positive learning atmosphere in classrooms. They work well with others and want to do their best.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour when moving between lessons and during assembly was good. Pupils are keen to talk to visitors about their school, particularly the oldest pupils, who made some perceptive and mature comments to the inspector about improvements in the school.
- Leaders have introduced consistent policies and procedures to support behaviour. Recently established behaviour logs are detailed and well maintained and show that support for individual pupils is carefully tailored to their needs, and so is proving successful. This reflects the school's commitment to inclusion, to the promotion of positive relationships and to equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and why it is harmful. A minority of parents who responded to Parent View expressed concerns about the way the school deals with bullying. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said, 'Bullying used to happen but the school has put a stop to it now.' Pupils know about the different forms bullying can take and how they can help to keep themselves safe. They are confident that adults in the school will help them with any concerns. Recently established school records indicate that incidents of bullying are uncommon and followed up appropriately, including close liaison with agencies where this is appropriate. Discrimination is not tolerated.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Frequent staff changes in the past year have frustrated efforts to improve the school more rapidly and developments have been too dependent on the executive headteacher. Recently appointed subject leaders have not yet been in school long enough to fully establish their roles and to use their knowledge and experience to influence improvements.
- Parents' views of the school's development are mixed and many parents would like to know

more about how well their children are learning. The school is already beginning to address this, and the recent introduction of 'phonics books', which provide a link between school and home, is a good step in the right direction. However, the school is aware that more needs to be done to develop parental understanding about their children's learning and how they can best support their children at home.

- The executive headteacher's clear focus on the quality of teaching and learning has been central to successfully raising expectations and introducing a shared commitment and drive to improve the school. The leadership base has been effectively extended with the recent appointment of the head of school, who has quickly established her role. The executive headteacher and head of school work very effectively as a team. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement.
- Leaders have successfully established a range of policies and procedures so that there is greater consistency in the school's approach to issues such as behaviour and assessment. Pupils' progress is now regularly checked and used to identify pupils who may need extra help. However, this information is not always fully used by all teachers to ensure that work is set at the right level.
- The local authority has worked closely with leaders to ensure the school is on a more secure footing and continues to provide good-quality support. For example, the local authority has been actively involved in recruiting staff and in providing staff training.
- The curriculum is developing well, with appropriate opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, during singing assemblies, pupils listen attentively and enthusiastically join in with songs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The role played by the governing body has improved rapidly under the Chair of Governor's experienced and effective leadership. Procedures have been established to help governors to check the school's performance data in relation to other schools nationally and to ensure that school finances are monitored effectively. They know, for example, how pupil premium funding is being used to reduce gaps in pupils' achievement and how teachers' pay is linked to their effectiveness in classrooms. Governors have participated in a number of training opportunities, including completion of required safeguarding training. As a result, governors are increasingly confident in their role and provide appropriate levels of support and challenge. The Governing Body now has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and its role in ensuring the school continues to improve.

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	114408
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	399675

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	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Saxby
Headteacher	Anne Allison
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
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