

Rocks Park Primary School

Lashbrooks Road, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 2AY

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children progress well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of an effective mix of child-led and adult-led activities. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 are slightly above average. Standards in reading and writing in Key Stage 2 are much higher than those found in most schools.
- Across the school, most teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. Pupils make at least good progress during their lessons because activities are interesting and often creative.
- Pupils demonstrate a delight in learning and have high expectations of their own behaviour. They are always safe and their behaviour towards each other and around the school is courteous and considerate.
- Pupils learn a very good range of subjects which are linked well through the topics they study. Their learning in the arts is particularly impressive.
- Leadership is good because the effective action of the headteacher, other senior leaders and governors has rapidly improved standards in writing across the school and ensured consistently high results in Key Stage 2.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in Key Stage 1, although good, is not as rapid as in Key Stage 2.
- Not all teaching stretches pupils, especially the most able, as much as possible. Pupils are not always given opportunities to deeply explore and record their own ideas and discoveries.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors saw teaching in every class. They saw two assemblies, visited 15 lessons and observed pupils' behaviour in the two playgrounds. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other members of staff.
- The inspectors observed many aspects of the school's work, including supervision and support for pupils who need extra help. They examined pupils' work in their exercise books and on classroom and corridor wall displays.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including plans for what pupils will learn in each subject, plans for the school's future development, the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, pupils' attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, records of how pupils' learning is checked and tracked, and records of how the quality of teaching is checked.
- The views of parents and carers were taken into account through taking note of the 52 responses to the online Parent View survey and discussions with parents in the playground.
- Staff views were taken into consideration by looking at questionnaires completed by 15 staff members and through discussions with several members of staff.

Inspection team

Steven Popper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Penny Spencer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is much lower than the national average. This extra money is provided for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and those known to be eligible for free school meals. There are no pupils with a parent in the armed forces or in local authority care currently on roll, and very few pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion who is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs. Some of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs, whilst others have moderate learning difficulties. Five pupils currently have statements of special educational needs and have more complex learning needs.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is lower than in most other schools.
- The school is a member of a local informal partnership with several other local primary schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils across the school make rapid progress by:
 - making sure all pupils, particularly the most able, are stretched and challenged in their learning through frequent opportunities to explore their own ideas and discoveries in depth
 - making sure all pupils are given more opportunities to record their findings in ways they determine for themselves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They start school with skills that are broadly at the levels expected for their age and make good progress in all areas of their learning and development as they move through the Reception Year. They achieve well by the time they join Year 1.
- Results of the Year 1 national screening test in phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make) are higher than in most other schools. This reflects the school's focus on the high quality teaching of reading skills.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 slightly exceeds nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards have considerably improved in writing and slightly improved in mathematics since the previous year. Results in reading have remained about the same. However, pupils' progress in Key Stage 1, while good, is not as rapid as that in Key Stage 2. This is why the achievement of pupils is not outstanding.
- Results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have remained high over a period of years. Many more pupils reach the expected standards in reading and writing than in most other schools, and a very large majority reach the expected standards in mathematics. Standards in writing are particularly high.
- The very few pupils receiving support through the use of pupil premium funding make progress in line with other pupils. Their results in Key Stage 2 are in line with all other pupils. This is partly because of the effective individual and small group support in English and mathematics that eligible pupils receive.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. This is because they receive teaching which is well matched to their individual needs in most lessons and because of effective support from teaching assistants.
- Standards in speaking and listening are high across the school. Pupils express their knowledge and understanding confidently, politely and with precision.
- Enjoyment of reading is promoted well in the school. Pupils are heard to read regularly in Key Stage 2 and every day in Key Stage 1. They enjoy reading and talk about books with delight. For example, one Year 6 girl enthusiastically explained why she liked a particular author, whilst one Year 2 boy talked happily about reading with members of his family.
- Pupils use their literacy and mathematical skills in all subjects that they learn. For example, pupils' writing skills are utilised well in their lessons about the Tudors and the moon landing.
- Pupils present their work to a high standard, especially in the arts. They take care to produce the best work that they can. The very high quality display of work in classrooms and corridors gives pupils excellent models of what can be achieved.
- Parents express overwhelmingly positive views about the progress made by their children.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching across the school is consistently good and there are examples of outstanding practice. Teachers communicate high expectations of learning so that pupils understand what they need to do in order to learn and make good progress.
- Where teaching is best, lessons include frequent opportunities for pupils to share, discuss and explain their ideas in depth. Teaching in these lessons features a high level of challenge and very good opportunities for pupils to explore subjects in ways that they determine for themselves. The combination of these features leads to deep understanding and high standards of learning and progress. For example, one outstanding Year 4 lesson about letter writing gave pupils very good opportunities to put themselves in the position of Henry VIII and write a letter

from his point of view. This lesson extended pupils' understanding of a historical situation as well as of how to write, and allowed pupils to develop their own ideas very well.

- Where teaching is less effective, pupils are not always given such opportunities. A few lessons rely heavily on the use of worksheets which limit pupils' opportunities to make discoveries for themselves. As a result, pupils, especially the most able, are sometimes inhibited from exploring subjects as deeply or imaginatively as possible and, as a result, their ability to develop a deeper understanding and make more rapid progress is limited.
- Topic work is often used very effectively to link different subjects in a way that results in thoughtful and secure learning and absorbing lessons. For example, a Year 5 topic about space exploration was used to develop writing skills, artistic techniques, historical understanding, a sense of wonder about humanity's place in the universe, and a deeper appreciation of human achievement.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking and check their understanding. The best teaching features high quality dialogue between staff and pupils that excites pupils and deepens their learning and thinking. For example, in one outstanding Year 2 dance lesson, the teacher's skilful suggestions combined with the sharing of ideas about key features of dance enabled pupils to choreograph their own dances to a very high standard.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support the learning of individuals and groups of pupils of a range of abilities, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers set appropriate targets for pupils' future progress and pupils know what these are. They give clear advice to pupils about the strengths of their work and how to improve further. This was seen during lessons and in the marking of pupils' books.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage offers children good opportunities to experiment and make discoveries for themselves. The effective mix of child-led and adult-led activities leads to good progress and learning.
- Pupils interviewed by the inspectors praised the quality of teaching and said that they enjoyed their lessons.
- A very large majority of parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire thought that their children were taught well and made good progress as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils demonstrate a love of learning and have high expectations of themselves. This was seen across the school in all classes. However, pupils' attitudes to learning are not always exemplary, particularly when pupils are not given the opportunity to find things out for themselves.
- Pupils' behaviour in class, when moving around the school, during lunchtime and in the playgrounds is very good. Pupils are courteous at all times and considerate of each other. The school has a happy atmosphere.
- Relationships between pupils and adults and amongst the pupils themselves are very good. Pupils listen to each other and to staff very well.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and feel very safe in the school. They understand different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and how to keep themselves safe online. There have been no serious behavioural incidents recently in the school. Records of the very few behavioural incidents in the past demonstrate how the school offers a considerable level of care to all pupils involved.
- The school operates a highly effective behaviour management system. Pupils are well aware of how different forms of behaviour will be responded to, and feel that teachers and other staff are very effective in preventing or sorting out any poor behaviour that might arise.
- Attendance, including for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, has improved over time and is now slightly higher than in most other schools. This is because pupils find their lessons interesting and want to come to school.
- An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire thought that behaviour in the school was well managed and that their children were safe, happy and well

looked after.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors have very high ambitions for the school. The school ethos of 'only our best is good enough' ensures that staff have high expectations and that pupils are aspirational in their approach to learning. However, this drive for improvement has not yet resulted in excellent achievement for all pupils, which is why leadership and management are not outstanding.
- The progress of pupils and the quality of teaching are tracked systematically and analysed rigorously. This ensures that the school's evaluation of its own strengths and areas for development is accurate.
- Teachers are given performance management targets that relate very well to the key priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Decisions about pay awards to staff are explicitly linked to their success in meeting ambitious targets relating to improving pupils' achievement.
- Teachers are given opportunities to set themselves additional targets that relate to their own professional interests, and to gain additional training to support them in meeting their targets. As a result, teachers feel supported by senior leaders and have a very high level of commitment to the school.
- Pupil premium funding is spent where it has most impact. The individual and small-group support eligible pupils receive in reading, writing and mathematics has been effective in increasing their rate of progress.
- The curriculum offered to pupils is a considerable strength of the school. The range of subjects pupils learn is broad, balanced and highly stimulating, ranging from Aztec art, French, and photography, to children's rights, geography and basic engineering as seen in a kit-car construction project. The school has an excellent track record in the teaching of expressive arts and has achieved many awards for its work in the arts, physical education and sport, singing, ecological work and other areas.
- The school promotes pupils' active engagement in sport and intends to use the forthcoming additional sports funding to give staff further training, particularly in dance.
- The high quality school environment supports pupils' learning well, with lots of good advice how to produce good work on show. Displays, including those relating to a 'learning to learn' week, are extremely stimulating and presented to a very high standard. This helps communicate the school's high expectations of pupils and the value it puts on work of high quality.
- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as the exploration of children's rights and the promotion of an appreciation of different historical and cultural viewpoints on different issues. As a result, pupils understand how all human beings, including children, are of value and should be treated equally.
- The school ensures that all pupils are safe. It keeps proper and thorough records of its work in this area and meets statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. It has helped the school with the accuracy of its assessment of pupils.
- The headteacher has the well-founded confidence of a very large majority of parents, as well as of the school's governing body and all the staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are trained, active and capable. They offer well-organised challenge to the school. Governors understand data about pupils' achievement and are well informed about the school's performance and how it compares with that of other schools. They maintain an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and of pupils' learning, and set the headteacher appropriately challenging performance management targets that focus on improvements in these areas. Governors ensure the efficient management of financial resources, including the effective use of pupil premium funding. Their impact on the school's drive for improvement is good.

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	114471
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	429538

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angus Atherton-Palmer
Headteacher	Chris Davey
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2009
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