

Mile Oak Primary School

Graham Avenue, Portslade, Brighton, BN41 2WN

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders and governors have succeeded in improving the school's effectiveness since its previous inspection. Senior leaders, supported well by governors, lead the school effectively.
- Pupils of all abilities now achieve well. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and 6 has improved in the past two years. More-able pupils achieve well and those pupils eligible for extra funding are catching up quickly with others nationally.
- The early years provision is good. Children enjoy their start to school in the Reception classes where they learn well. Staff ensure children settle in quickly.
- There are good routines to support pupils with special educational needs so they make good progress.
- Reading is a real strength in the school and pupils like the incentives they have to read widely and often.
- Teaching has improved to typically good levels through the school.
- Pupils are now more enthusiastic to write stories and accounts. They use their writing in a variety of ways to extend their knowledge and skill. In mathematics, pupils have improved their abilities to solve simple and more difficult number problems.
- Pupils continue to behave well, aided by the school's clear expectations and routines. Levels of safety are good. Relationships are good between pupils and with staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all pupils are yet fully confident to spell or punctuate their work accurately in Years 1 to 6.
- In Years 3 to 6, pupils do not always apply their mathematical skills confidently to support their learning in other subjects.
- Not all parents are positive about the school, in particular how it provides for their children and the effectiveness of communication.
- The highest quality of teaching is not yet a consistent feature through the school. As a result, pupils are not yet making rapid progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning and looked at pupils' work, including some from the previous academic year. They observed 20 parts of lessons and visited many subjects across the curriculum. Three parts of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also discussed the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and visited two assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils and listened to them reading. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and at playtime.
- Inspectors looked at documentation such as policies, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and the school's development planning. They looked at attendance figures, records of behaviour incidents, and at the school's website.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders to discuss the progress that groups of pupils make throughout the school. They analysed the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress. An inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspection team examined the records of the local authority's involvement with the school and spoke with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors considered parents' views of the school through informal discussions before school and the school's own recent parental survey. They also considered the 59 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors also took into account the views of the 25 staff who completed the staff questionnaire. The inspection team also talked to staff during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Sharp	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Greenhalgh	Additional Inspector
Hazel Burnie	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are White British and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The additional government funding is for children who are looked after and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school manages an early morning breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school works closely with others as it is part of the Portslade Cluster. This comprises of six other primary, two special and one secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding levels by:
 - leaders implementing initiatives quickly to improve pupils' levels of spelling and punctuation in Years 1 to 6
 - ensuring that pupils in Years 3 to 6 apply their mathematical skills in a variety of subjects
 - helping staff to implement the new systems of assessment started this term so they can identify even more accurately how well pupils in their class learn.
- Implement plans quickly to improve communication and links with parents so that they and the school work together more effectively to support pupils' learning and enjoyment of the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders, supported by governors, have worked together effectively to remedy most issues from the previous inspection. The improvements they have made to the quality of teaching have influenced the speed of pupils' progress, which has raised their levels of achievement.
- Middle leaders (those responsible for the coordination of subjects, year groups or aspects such as assessment) are now more confident to lead their areas of responsibility. This has led to a quicker pace of improvement, but routines are not yet fully effective. For example, not all staff are fully confident in the revised approaches started this term.
- The headteacher and senior leaders quickly identified, following the previous inspection, those staff needing support and set higher expectations for both staff and pupils alike. Most, but not all staff, have appreciated the increased expectations. Some staff said they would like more training, although the school has provided a good range.
- Senior leaders observe teachers effectively to improve the quality of teaching. This helps them gauge how well pupils learn and the way in which staff adopt new routines. Following the HMI monitoring visit, leaders are clearer in choosing priorities. Staff know about how progress of pupils in their class relates to their salary progression and promotion.
- The school uses its additional funding well to support those pupils for whom it is intended. As a result, their achievement has risen to narrow the gap with those nationally. The school caters for these pupils well in day-to-day lessons, benefiting from activities matched closely to their needs.
- The coordination of those pupils needing extra help has been effective in making sure that they get the help they need quickly. Parents appreciate the support their children receive, and the level of communication is good, although not all agree.
- Pupils say that they find the range of subjects they follow exciting, highlighting topics such as 'The great outdoors', visits to local places of interest and discussions about whether houses should be built on the school grounds. Good combinations of activities help broaden pupils' experiences. These develop their basic reading, writing and number skills as well as computing, sporting or musical skills. Pupils can become 'writing champions' if they write regularly and to a high standard. Mathematical activities are generally well planned, but in Years 3 to 6, pupils do not readily apply their skills in a range of ways in different subjects.
- A range of visits, visitors, assembly themes and clear expectations develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding effectively.
- The school works well with others locally through its cluster working arrangements and increasingly this is helping staff work together with others to identify and share good practice.
- The views of parents expressed directly during the inspection, and on line, indicate that a majority of them feel that the school is doing well. However, a significant minority expressed disappointment at the levels of communication, late notice of events and in information about their children's progress. The school acknowledged to inspectors that this was sometimes the case. The school has identified the need to communicate better with parents, not least in the way that the school has improved since the last inspection.
- The local authority works well with the school to identify further areas to improve, provide training and to conduct reviews to help the school gauge its pace of improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

Governors give the school good support to identify areas where it needs to improve. Despite changes in its membership, governors continue to set an expectation for the school to be outstanding. They appreciate how the quality of teaching relates to salary progression, benefiting from their knowledge of the quality of teaching from the regular updates provided by senior staff. The Chair of the Governing Body is using his educational expertise to support senior leaders and other governors. Governors know how the school's performance compares to others locally, as well as nationally, and want it to be higher still. They ensure the effective use of additional funding for vulnerable pupils and for more pupils to engage in a wider range of sports activities. Training, mainly from the local authority, is also strengthening their ability to challenge the school's senior leaders and staff to improve further. Governors, along with senior staff, have rightly identified the need to work with parents more effectively, so they too can influence developments within the school. Governors are conscientious to ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to take part in all activities, when possible, and to ensure that safeguarding routines, including checks on staffing appointments, are up to date.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are well mannered, courteous and work well with each other. Pupils confirmed that behaviour, though not perfect, is typically at this level. Pupils are aware that the school motto, 'Only my best will do' is important. Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost always good, although some pupils' attention wanders if they are not reminded to keep focused on the lesson.
- Pupils through the school relate well to each other, which aids their learning within lessons. The youngest pupils start school confidently. As they move through the classes, pupils' range of responsibilities increases. Some pupils voluntarily give up their lunchtimes to help much younger children develop their reading, writing and social skills, for example.
- Staff support pupils with special educational needs well. They identify their range of needs quickly, which includes both academic and social. This helps to ensure they do not feel left behind in lesson activities.
- The school prepares pupils well for life beyond the school gates. Pupils enjoyed discussing issues around the recent Scottish referendum, for example. The school won a debating competition recently and a recent poetry week included workshops on Scottish dialect and poetry. Pupils also engage in a variety of charity work, including raising funds for a local hospice.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel happy and safe, as is shown by their good attendance. At playtime there is a high adult presence to ensure that pupils have an active, enjoyable and safe playtime. Pupils say that staff are quick to investigate any bullying should it occur, but not all parents agree. School records indicate that bullying incidents are rare, but do take place.
- Pupils enjoy attending the well-supervised breakfast club and the activities it provides.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved to typically good levels through the school. Teachers and their teaching assistants work well together to create a good atmosphere to help all pupils achieve well. Teaching assistants have a good balance of support and encouraging pupils to 'have a go'.
- Since the previous inspection, the quality of guidance given by teachers through marking and discussion has improved. This has helped pupils to become more aware of how to improve and how they can challenge themselves by tackling harder work. This has helped them to learn more effectively.
- Staff promote reading very well through the school, both in lessons and more widely. Reading champions are proud to wear their different coloured sweatshirts and 'reading millionaires' – those who are estimated to have read at least one million words, are admired by fellow pupils. Children become enthusiastic readers who tackle unfamiliar words confidently. Older pupils know a good range of authors and have favourites.
- Approaches to writing have changed since the previous inspection. The school's efforts to get pupils to write more enthusiastically have succeeded. These approaches include, for example, writing letters to a local building developer, creative story writing and poetry. Stories are often imaginative as staff use a wide variety of ways to motivate pupils to write. There are still some weaknesses in pupils' spelling and punctuation accuracy in Years 1 to 6.
- Teaching in the early years is consistently effective. The variety of activities develops children's confidence and understanding in their basic reading, writing, number and physical skills.
- The school's revision of assessment routines, in line with changes taking place nationally, is developing. While most teachers assess pupils' progress, and modify their plans and lessons accordingly, not all staff are equally confident.
- Lessons using computing and audio-visual technology resources are a feature of pupils' learning and understanding. Pupils say they enjoy using their laptops, computers and e-readers to help boost their learning and enjoyment.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved to typically good levels through the school. This is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Results in national assessments for Year 2 pupils improved in the most recent national tests. They are now at broadly average levels.
- This pattern is similar for pupils in Year 6, where national test results also reflect improved attainment. The proportion reaching the high levels also improved this year, but the school, rightly, wants to

continue to increase this proportion.

- The achievement of the most able pupils has been a focus since the previous inspection. These pupils now achieve well given their starting points. The school identifies the needs of these pupils more carefully and provides support when needed so that they reach their potential. The proportion of the most able pupils reaching better than the expected levels now compares favourably to the national picture.
- Pupils have a good start in developing basic skills. Pupils are avid and confident readers by the time they leave the school. In the latest phonics (the sounds that letters and combinations of letters make) check, the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard increased markedly.
- Pupils' writing abilities have also improved, particularly in the level of creativity and quantity of work produced. The accuracy of spelling and punctuation is not consistent in Years 1 to 6.
- Although early in the term, pupils are already becoming more confident in their counting, tables knowledge and simple problem solving. Their past work shows that pupils make good progress in their calculation and shape. Older pupils are confident when solving work connected to fractions.
- Increased funding to promote pupils' physical activity is having a positive impact. A higher level of resources results in more pupils taking part in a greater number of activities. These range from football, netball, cricket, indoor athletics, and cross-country championships to dance-based activities after school.
- Pupils who are eligible for extra funding now achieve well. Gaps in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics between others in the school and others nationally were typically around two terms. This is likely to reduce to around a term following this year's national tests. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection.
- The very few pupils from minority ethnic heritages achieve well as they are supported with activities appropriate to their needs.
- Pupils with special educational needs also now achieve well. Although there are still gaps in their attainment, typically two terms, these are narrowing compared to others nationally. These pupils compare well, however, to others in the school and locally. A clear focus on the needs of this group of pupils results in them having activities matched closely to their needs.

The early years provision

is good

- Clear leadership of this aspect of the school enables children to make good progress from their starting points. These are often lower than is typically expected. Teaching is consistently good. Staff are vigilant in keeping children safe at all times.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection were complimentary about how the school helps their children to have a good start to school. Comments such as, 'My children have always wanted to come to school, so if they are happy, I am happy', reflect their recent experiences. Staff consider each child's needs carefully, each overseen by a specific adult.
- Children make good progress. They develop their early reading, counting and writing skills systematically. They were keen to show off their early writing skills to inspectors. When choosing activities for themselves, they play, pretend to be builders and office workers and develop their physical skills well. On occasions, some children's learning falters when they 'run out of steam' having lost interest in the activity.
- Children like acting out different roles such as receptionists, and happily attempt to use their speaking and early writing skills to record what visitors want and to explain what they are doing.
- There is a good balance of planned activities both inside and outside of the classroom. Outside resources are organised to help pupils use them easily. Some resources are in need of updating or refurbishing. They are not as appealing to the children as they could be.

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	114430
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	450943

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	531
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gordon Macrae
Headteacher	Susan Mines
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 February 2013
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