

Park Mead Primary School

Upper Dicker, Hailsham, BN27 3QP

Inspection dates 9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
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 managers, including governors, have taken highly effective action to secure improvements to all aspects of school life.
- Teaching and achievement have improved year-on-year since the previous inspection and are now good.
- Standards have risen rapidly, especially in Key Stage 1. Pupils' rate of progress has increased across the school. They reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Governors play a crucial role in improving teaching and learning. They work highly effectively to challenge and support the headteacher and other leaders to strive for excellence.
- Pupils feel safe at school and measures to ensure pupils are kept safe are robust.
- Behaviour has improved and is now good. Pupils are courteous, working and playing well together.
- Attitudes to learning have improved and pupils are engaged in lessons. They concentrate when working alone and collaborate well when working together. This has a positive impact on their achievement.
- Early years provision is good. Children enjoy their learning and staff help them to develop the skills they need to be well prepared for Year 1.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. In this way, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The feedback teachers give is not always precise enough to ensure pupils make the most rapid progress possible.
- There are not enough opportunities in some subjects for pupils to solve problems and investigate solutions. This means pupils' thinking skills are not always promoted as well as they could be.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, including the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they make), writing and mathematics. Four of these observations were conducted jointly with school leaders.
- As well as looking at pupils' work in class, the inspector looked at the work pupils had completed over time in their books.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as communications from, and discussions with, parents during the inspection. The views from the 12 returned staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector attended an assembly, heard pupils read and met with staff, pupils, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body, including the Chair.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, logs of behavioural incidents, attendance figures, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, records of checks on the quality of teaching, and information about pupils' academic achievement.

Inspection team

Jeanie Jovanova, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority or pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is average. Due to the size of the school, there are usually only two or three disadvantaged pupils in each year group.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than is the case nationally. There are currently no pupils who speak English as an additional language, whereas nationally nearly one in five does.
- Early years provision is comprised of one Reception class which all pupils attend full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The previous head of school has been appointed to the role of headteacher. There have been new additions to the governing body. For example, the previous executive headteacher is now a governor. Two teachers are currently on maternity leave.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is outstanding overall by:
 - ensuring the feedback pupils are given is precise to enable them to know exactly what to do to improve their work and to make their progress more rapid
 - creating more opportunities in all subjects for pupils to solve problems and investigate solutions to develop deeper thinking.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders and governors have successfully embedded their vision of high aspirations and of a school driven by a deep commitment to moral values. This has created a calm and industrious atmosphere where pupils can thrive both socially and academically. The quality of teaching has improved so pupils are now learning well and developing the attitudes and behaviours that will stand them in good stead both in secondary school and as they go on to adult life.
- There is a seamless link between school improvement planning, teachers' performance targets and the highly effective training staff are offered. The effectiveness of this system has been a major factor in the rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' outcome.
- Leaders make careful and regular checks on the quality of teaching. By providing high-quality training, leaders have motivated teachers to constantly review their practice. There is a real excitement about sharing innovative ideas that further improve teaching and deepen pupils' learning experiences.
- The roles of middle leaders have been very well developed. These staff now contribute significantly to improving the quality of teaching. They support colleagues to improve their practice by checking planning, looking at work in books and observing lessons. Following these activities, middle leaders provide helpful guidance, identifying strengths and areas for development.
- Leaders have successfully resolved the recommendations from the previous inspection. For example, pupils now behave well in lessons because activities interest them and provide the right level of challenge.
- Leaders have developed a robust and coherent system for checking pupils' progress in all year groups. They check the progress of individual and groups of pupils carefully and make sure that anyone in danger of falling behind is quickly helped to catch up. This system is now being shared across the local authority because it is such an effective way of measuring pupils' achievement.
- The school has developed a vibrant curriculum which interests pupils and therefore leads to high levels of engagement. There is a strong link across subjects so pupils have the time to study topics in great depth because they revisit them in a range of lessons. This depth of understanding was apparent in an assembly that pupils presented where they outlined what they had learnt about bees. They had not only learnt a phenomenal amount of scientific detail about the insects but had also developed their writing and computer skills to great effect.
- Leaders have improved the level of involvement and satisfaction that parents have with the school. Respondents to the Parent View survey were unanimous in their support for the school's leadership.
- Leaders ensure pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain by introducing ideas such as democracy, community and enterprise. There are various opportunities for pupils to vote on matters of importance to the school community. For example, candidates for the posts of pupil ambassadors have to outline why they should be voted in to represent the school at different events.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Using current research on how the brain works, leaders create a calm environment with an exceptional range of opportunities for pupils to reflect on life and their response to it. In the Reception class, there is a special area with soothing music, soft lighting and Indian chiming bells which children use to refocus if they have got overexcited or upset. Outside the headteacher's office, there is a space dedicated to calm and concentration. Pupils can sit, listening to soothing music, and engage in calming activities. During the inspection, pupils as young as Year 1 were completing highly intricate colouring sheets showing an exceptional level of skill and concentration. Strong links with the local independent school ensure pupils meet other youngsters from a range of backgrounds and ethnic groups.
- The school's curriculum is built around four main drivers, including tolerance. Pupils know what this means and are committed to ensuring they show tolerance and respect in their everyday lives. For this reason, discrimination is not accepted in any form. School records show that incidents of discrimination are extremely rare; there have been none in the last two years.
- Leaders are wholeheartedly committed to promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that pupils from different groups have an equal chance of achieving success. They make careful checks on the academic achievement of different groups and ensure that all pupils have equal access to enrichment activities.
- The school fosters good relations. This ensures that relationships across the school are very positive. Adults act as excellent role models for pupils because of the way they work well together to secure improvements. Pupils feel safe because they know they can trust adults to look after them.
- Leaders have used the primary physical education and sport funding highly effectively. Governors ensure that this is the case by challenging spending decisions. They ensure that all pupils leave the school as strong and confident swimmers. Pupils are excited by the improved quality of physical education teaching.

During playtime, the inspector saw a group practising handstands and other movements they had learned in gymnastics. They knew all the correct terminology and how to execute the moves carefully. There is a broader variety of after-school clubs now available and this has increased participation rates. Pupils' physical well-being has improved as a result of the judicious use of the funding.

- The small size of the school means the number of disadvantaged pupils in each cohort is low. However, the school uses the funding it receives to ensure that these pupils make equally good progress so that any gaps in attainment are narrowed and, in many cases, closed.
- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding is effective and all statutory requirements are met. For example, the system for checking that all adults who work with pupils are suitable is very rigorous.
- The local authority has supported the school highly effectively. For example, by providing valuable training and ensuring regular visits corroborated improvements made and identified further areas for development. As the local authority correctly judges the school to be good, the frequency of these visits has reduced accordingly. The headteacher now shares her expertise on the new curriculum with other schools across the county.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is highly effective. Governors have been a driving force in supporting and challenging leaders to make the necessary improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. They know that the quality of teaching has improved and understand what leaders are doing to build on those improvements. Governors use a range of information to compare data on the school with others nationally. They ask questions about pupils' academic performance and hold leaders to account for improving this. The governing body has been judicious when appointing permanent and temporary teaching staff. Governors are keen to retain good staff and have found a range of ways to reward exceptional performance. Conversely, where staff do not meet their targets, governors will withhold pay rises. They know that those targets are closely linked to the school's improvement priorities. A member of staff from the independent school sitting on the governing body further strengthens those important ties.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are considerate and courteous around the school and in lessons. Playtimes and lunchtimes are harmonious, older pupils look after younger ones. The good range of resources and equipment on offer means there are plenty of productive activities for all.
- Pupils are interested and engaged in lessons. Routines are well established. Pupils follow teachers' instructions in a timely manner which helps them to be well organised so little learning time is lost.
- Pupils attend well and are punctual because they are keen to come to school. Morning routines are well established and lead to a calm and productive start to the day.
- Pupils who have particular behavioural needs are effectively helped to develop strategies to improve their behaviour. In this way, the number of incidents in which they are involved has reduced over time.
- Pupils are building on their positive attitudes to learning by taking more responsibility for evaluating their own work. However, behaviour for learning in lessons is not outstanding because it is not fully developed. There are some pupils who still need adult encouragement to identify their next steps and have the confidence to move on to them independently.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Systems for checking that pupils are kept safe are robust and staff are fully trained in spotting and responding to safeguarding issues.
- Most parents say that their child feels safe at school. Pupils can explain why they feel safe and know who to turn to on the rare occasions they do not.
- Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe. Pupils are very clear about internet safety. They state emphatically that you must never give out your personal details and know that adults sometimes pretend to be younger to try to befriend children online.
- Pupils have a good grasp of what bullying is. They are very clear that it is repeated behaviour and that it can happen face-to-face or on mobile phones or the internet. They know that people use derogatory terms about others' beliefs or backgrounds, skin colour or physical characteristics. However, they say nothing like this ever happens in their school because they all know it is wrong and upsetting.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teachers use questions well to establish what pupils know and to encourage them to think about their work carefully and justify their choices. This was particularly noticeable in a writing lesson where the teacher was prompting pupils to refine their ideas about their characters' personalities. The teacher challenged pupils to expand on their initial ideas and this meant the characters they created became more convincing and their writing more engaging to the reader.
- Pupils learn how to write well because teachers plan activities that build coherently on one another. For example, younger pupils successfully learnt how to write instructions because they were introduced to key features bit by bit. By the end of the unit, they were confident in putting all the elements together to produce work of a very high standard.
- The teaching of reading is supplemented by ensuring pupils practise their skills across the curriculum. The pupils who prepared the assembly about bees had gleaned much of their knowledge by reading information books carefully. Using reading across subjects ensures pupils understand the vital place it has in our everyday lives.
- Pupils are equipped with a range of different strategies to help them solve mathematical problems. During the inspection, older pupils were being introduced to a different method for simplifying complicated calculations. They were fascinated by how it worked and delighted to be able to tackle increasingly complex work with ease. It is clearly an established feature that pupils choose what resources they feel will help them in mathematics lessons.
- The most-able are being increasingly challenged in lessons. They have tasks that are carefully designed to deepen their learning. For example, when reading, questions probe their understanding about less-obvious aspects of the text so that they have to think deeply about the author's intent. Strong links with the local independent school allow them access to science laboratories and they receive higher-level mathematics teaching at a local secondary school, leading to rapid improvements in these skills.
- Teachers give pupils regular feedback on how to improve their work, and much of this is good. Pupils are often encouraged to use more imaginative vocabulary and there is a concerted focus on punctuation. Work in books shows that pupils therefore make great gains in these areas. However, feedback, both written and oral, is not always precise enough to ensure progress is as rapid as it could be. For example, teachers do not always make comments about specific, technical aspects of writing and so miss opportunities to help pupils develop those skills further.
- In science and mathematics lessons, pupils are given opportunities to solve problems and investigate possible solutions. However, these opportunities are less frequent in other subjects which limits the development of pupils' thinking skills.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen across the school since the previous inspection. Rates of progress have increased and this has enabled pupils to make up any lost ground due to prior poor teaching. Teaching is now good so pupils make good progress. The school's results in the national Year 2 tests at the end of 2014 were the highest for at least six years. Overall attainment is now in line with what is expected in Year 6 and far more pupils are now reaching higher levels from Reception upwards.
- The teaching of phonics has improved dramatically and standards in the phonics check in Year 1 have risen accordingly. Consequently, standards in reading are rising further on up the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because staff make careful checks to see that their needs are being appropriately met. Teachers and teaching assistants support them well in lessons to ensure they understand and can complete tasks successfully.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Across the school, they make similarly high rates of progress as other groups, and sometimes, better. This is systematically eliminating any gaps in the attainment of these pupils. In 2014, there were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 to comment on their achievement without identifying them.
- The most able are also benefiting from improvements in teaching. Consequently, they achieve well. The proportions reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are continuing to rise.

The early years provision is good

- Children make good progress in the early years because there are lots of exciting activities that interest and engage them.
- Teaching is good. Staff use curriculum themes well to engage children in their learning. Teachers are particularly adept at extending children's vocabulary through these themes. On the first day of the inspection, in a phonics lesson, children were introduced to the idea of using a speech bubble to record in writing what they might say in role as pirates. The next day saw numerous children doing this independently as they found buried treasure or made each other 'walk the plank' on the climbing frame. One child even wrote a message, put it in a bottle and threw it out 'to sea'. She subsequently got rescued by another child who found and read the note.
- Leadership of early years is good. Leaders make a careful check on children's progress and attainment, and have ensured that standards at the end of Reception continue to rise and are now high in comparison to national. In this way, increasing numbers of children are well prepared for moving on to Year 1.
- Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning. They provide valuable insights into what children enjoy and can do at home. Staff then build on these skills by designing activities in school that will maximise them.
- Children are kept safe in the early years provision. They are taught how to take calculated risks, for example when climbing and using scissors and other equipment.
- Behaviour in early years is good. A particular strength is how children are increasingly able to talk about what they are learning and what helps their understanding. Children engage with activities for extended periods of time and play together harmoniously.
- Adults provide well-thought-out activities which develop children's skills across a range of areas. Children were fascinated by trying to pick up as many matchsticks as possible with tweezers in 30 seconds. They then had to count them and record this against their name on the chart. They were highly motivated to beat the teacher's score. This clearly developed both their manual dexterity and mathematical and writing skills.

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	462440

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Simmons
Headteacher	Lizzie Field
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 May 2013
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