

Cornfield School

Cornfield Close, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 6HY

Inspection dates	22–23 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, governors and committee members have secured substantial and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.
- Effective staff teamwork and a shared commitment to helping pupils do their best has ensured continued improvement during a period of change.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. She is well supported by senior and middle leaders.
- Teachers use their confident subject knowledge effectively to plan good-quality learning, taking careful account of pupils' needs.
- Pupils make rapid progress in a wide range of subjects, including art, science, and information and communication technology.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable and effective contribution to pupils' development and learning. They work positively with teachers and are responsive to pupils' needs.
- Improvements in the teaching of reading have had a dramatic effect on pupils' attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of books. Pupils make substantially better progress in reading than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Strong relationships are key to the school's success in securing a positive, purposeful learning atmosphere.
- Pupils feel safe, secure and valued. They behave well.
- Governors and committee members have a good understanding of the school's work. They work very well with leaders across the federation. They make good use of resources and ensure the school continues to improve.
- The school's focus on developing pupils' personal and social skills makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and well-being. Pupils in all key stages are well prepared for the next stage in their education and for the world of work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make sufficiently fast progress in writing.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they might in mathematics. They have too few opportunities to practise numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils do better in English by teaching them how to improve the quality and depth of their writing.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to practise and improve numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders, governors and members of the management committee have steered the school through a period of considerable change since the previous inspection. They have effectively overseen the creation of a key stage 2 department and minimised the potential impact of a number of key staff changes on pupils' learning. They have sustained a focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment during an unsettled time, ensuring continuous improvement in pupils' outcomes over the past three years.
- The school is now benefiting from a more settled period. The school's atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Pupils want to do well. They work hard and behave well. Strong relationships are a key feature of the school, ensuring that pupils feel secure and valued. Adults use their deep understanding of pupils' needs and circumstances to support their personal and academic achievement.
- The headteacher's determination and commitment to improving the school has been central to its success since the previous inspection. She provides clear, confident direction for her colleagues. They share her aspirations for the school's development.
- Senior and middle leaders support the headteacher very capably and make a valuable contribution to the school's work. For example, the special needs coordinator works with her colleagues to keep careful checks on pupils' progress, while the leader for teaching and learning completes comprehensive analyses of strengths and areas for development in teaching.
- Strong teamwork is key to the school's success and to its capacity for continued improvement. Members of staff work very well together. They make good use of training and coaching to develop their practice. Staff morale is good. Most who completed the online staff questionnaire say they are proud to work in the school.
- Leaders manage staff performance positively and effectively. They insist on the very best for pupils and will not tolerate poor teaching. Leaders have successfully and robustly tackled weak teaching since the previous inspection so that pupils' progress has improved.
- Leaders have established ongoing checks on teaching throughout the school year, focused on practice in the classroom, pupils' work and teachers' planning. They give teachers prompt feedback about aspects of practice which work well and advice about areas for development. They provide good-quality support to ensure teachers and teaching assistants continue to develop their practice. Leaders' reports clearly illustrate the substantial improvements made to teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.
- The school's broad, well-planned curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop academically, physically and personally. Activities such as outdoor learning and cooking extend pupils' skills and help to make learning very purposeful. Leaders have identified further developments needed to improve pupils' learning in writing and mathematics and continue to make improvements to the way subjects are taught. For example, they have plans in place to give pupils more opportunities to use and strengthen numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics, such as science.
- The curriculum contributes well to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in assemblies leaders ask pupils to consider wide-ranging issues, including personal responsibility and different beliefs and cultures. High-quality art teaching gives pupils opportunities to express themselves through a wide range of media. During the inspection, pupils enthusiastically and proudly explained their work, confidently referring to famous artists and artistic movements they have studied.
- The school's strong focus on developing pupils' self-esteem and personal skills contributes substantially to their appreciation of British values. For example, adults regularly encourage pupils to consider personal responsibilities and to reflect on the effect their own choices can have on others. Teachers give pupils challenging activities during ethics lessons, helping pupils to think about developing their own opinions as well as considering differing viewpoints.
- Leaders use the pupil premium grant effectively to support pupils' progress. Personalised learning programmes ensure all pupils make good progress, regardless of background or ability.
- Leaders make good use of the primary sport premium. For example, specialist coaches supplement the teaching of physical education so that pupils participate daily in sports activities and have opportunities to develop particular interests.
- The local authority's periodic reports provide helpful feedback to leaders about the school's work. However, the independent school improvement partner has provided the most significant input. He regularly visits the school, producing comprehensive feedback and reports. These give a vivid picture of the school's journey and of the extent of improvements made in teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.

- The school works productively with the two other schools in the federation, making good use of resources and expertise to ensure pupils achieve well. This has been particularly valuable during a time of staff changes.
- Most parents and carers feel that the school prepares pupils well for the future. One parent commented, 'Our son has made better progress than we could have dreamt possible', while another said, 'This school is giving my son the future he deserves'.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors and committee members know the school well. They work constructively together to provide good levels of challenge and support for school leaders.
 - Committee members say that the previous inspection acted as a 'wake up call' for the school's leaders, prompting serious and concerted efforts to improve pupils' achievement. They recognise the significant improvements made to the school's performance since the previous inspection. For example, they are justifiably proud of the fact that every pupil has moved on to employment, education or training at the end of key stage 4 during the past three years.
 - The chair of governors and chair of the management committee regularly visit the school and review pupils' progress with school leaders. Improved assessment procedures have given them a much more accurate and reliable view of pupils' achievement than previously, including the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Clear policies and procedures ensure pupils are safe. Leaders make sure that staff and governors are well qualified and confident about safeguarding procedures and know what to do in case of a concern. Leaders work well with agencies to support pupils and families. The school environment is safe and well maintained. Good-quality perimeter fencing, key pads on external doors and well-established procedures for parents and visitors to sign in ensure pupils are secure. Strong relationships and consistent behaviour management procedures mean that pupils are confident about approaching members of staff if worried or anxious.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have much higher expectations of pupils' learning than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers' belief in their pupils, and their quiet insistence that pupils can do even better, has steadily raised pupils' aspirations and outcomes over the past three years.
- Teachers take great care to plan work which builds on individual pupils' understanding. They continuously assess and review pupils' learning. This ensures they swiftly identify any pupils making slower progress, making changes to the work set so that pupils' learning quickly picks up again.
- Teachers and teaching assistants share a thorough understanding of pupils' needs. They work very effectively together to support pupils' development. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning, encouragement and reassurance effectively to check pupils' understanding and to motivate them to persevere when the work is more difficult.
- Leaders have secured substantial improvements in the teaching of reading which have had a significant effect on pupils' progress. Teachers in all year groups follow the school's policy for teaching reading so that teaching consistently builds on pupils' reading skills. Teachers know pupils well and support appropriately, encouraging good use of phonics and other strategies where needed, while avoiding giving pupils too much help.
- Teachers encourage and inspire pupils to read an increasingly wide range of books. The attractive and well-resourced library gives pupils a variety of good-quality, engaging and interesting books to encourage reading.
- The teaching of writing securely equips pupils with fundamental writing skills as they move up through the year groups. Teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to write and to practise writing skills. However, while teaching effectively builds pupils' ability to write competently, teachers do not fully develop the depth and quality of pupils' writing, so that pupils do not achieve their full potential in this aspect of English.
- Mathematics teaching builds numeracy skills well, giving pupils the confidence to use different strategies and approaches to tackle tasks and problems. However, while regular mathematics lessons effectively ensure pupils make good progress, opportunities are missed for pupils to use, practise and improve numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. They use marking well to reinforce expectations of pupils' work. They use homework appropriately to build pupils' responsibility and resilience.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are polite and welcoming. They have responded well to teachers' rising expectations since the previous inspection. They present their work with increasing care and speak sensibly and proudly about their work and achievements.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know some of the steps they can take to help to keep themselves safe. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 thoroughly enjoyed cooking Indian food, following safe practices. They are well informed about internet safety.
- Pupils say their teachers take good care of them and help them to do their best. Most parents who completed the online survey Parent View feel pupils are well cared for and safe.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities available, which contribute to their enjoyment of school and to improving attendance. For example, during the inspection pupils were keen to improve and perfect their personal performances in a trampolining session, encouraging each other to persevere. The older pupils particularly value the work experience opportunities arranged by the school.
- Attendance rates have risen steadily since the previous inspection and are higher than the national average for special schools. Leaders have successfully reduced the amount of persistent absenteeism over the past three years.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use their perceptive understanding of pupils' individual needs to help them to develop personal and social skills very well. For example, they guide pupils to think about how their actions affect others so that pupils are quick to apologise when they make a mistake. Adults' success in supporting pupils' personal and social skills makes a significant contribution to the process of preparing pupils for life beyond school.
- Arrangements for breakfast give pupils a positive and sociable time at the start of the school day. Adults use this opportunity very well to develop pupils' personal and social skills and to ensure they are in the right frame of mind for learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Strong respect between pupils and adults underpins pupils' good behaviour and the purposeful learning atmosphere in the school. Pupils say that adults listen and value what they have to say.
- Pupils know that adults in the school have the highest expectations of their behaviour. They understand the rules and follow them most of the time. Pupils behave well during breaktimes and lessons and move around the school sensibly and responsibly.
- Occasionally, a small number of pupils struggle to behave well. When this happens, adults respond promptly and calmly. Adults consistently follow the school's behaviour policy, so that pupils feel secure.
- Pupils say that adults deal with occasional concerns about bullying incidents quickly and successfully. School records support this view.
- Most parents and staff who completed the online questionnaire feel pupils behave well.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils join the school in different year groups and with differing levels of attainment. Some have struggled in schools before joining Cornfield School and have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. These factors, combined with very small numbers of pupils in each year group, mean that comparisons with other schools nationally are not reliable.
- Teachers assess pupils' needs thoroughly when they join the school, planning learning which is closely tailored to pupils' differing needs and starting points. Teachers are alert to pupils' developing needs, putting in prompt and effective help for anyone making slower progress.
- The work in pupils' books and the school's own information about how well pupils are learning, indicate that pupils in all key stages make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress during key stage 2. Teachers and teaching assistants quickly establish expectations and routines when pupils join the school in Year 5 so that they settle and feel secure. Pupils' progress has increased steadily over the past year.
- The majority of pupils in key stages 3 and 4 make good progress. The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress has increased in all subjects, with around three quarters making progress in line with national expectations. All pupils who have been at the school throughout key stage 4 completed GCSEs this year and are on track to achieve their predicted grades.

- Higher expectations and improved teaching since the previous inspection mean that all groups achieve equally well, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able. The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally at the end of key stage 4 have steadily narrowed since the previous inspection.
- The school's highly effective approach to teaching reading has made a significant impact on pupils' progress and outcomes. Pupils read often and develop the skills to read efficiently. Readers talk confidently about books and parents report pupils' increasing appetite for reading at home. Pupils learn how authors use language and vocabulary to create effects, such as building tension and describing settings. Increasing numbers of pupils read at least in line with their chronological age. Across the school, pupils have made, on average, two years' progress in reading during the past 12 months.
- Pupils make good gains in writing. Most develop a consistent, clear handwriting style and learn to write competently. Close attention to pupils' needs when they join the school means that some pupils with very low starting points make dramatic progress. However, while most pupils make rapid progress, some do not achieve their full potential in writing because teachers do not always help them to increase the quality and depth of their writing fully.
- Leaders have made good use of teachers' mathematical expertise in the school very well to minimise the impact of staffing changes on pupils' progress. Most pupils in all key stages have made at least expected progress in mathematics during the current year. However, leaders have rightly identified the need to strengthen the quality of pupils' progress in mathematics now that staffing arrangements are more settled.
- Mathematics outcomes at the end of key stage 4 have risen steadily over the past three years. All leavers now achieve recognised qualifications in mathematics, a clear improvement on previous years. Pupils currently in Year 11 are on track to achieve similar standards in 2016.
- Work placements and college courses successfully help pupils to acquire workplace skills and to pursue ambitions beyond key stage 4. Teaching takes good account of pupils' personal and behavioural development, so that pupils develop the positive attitudes and emotional well-being needed to learn well.

School details

Unique reference number	126170
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10002293

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	9–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Cook (chair of federation) Geoff Palmer (chair of management committee)
Headteacher	Maria Davis
Telephone number	01903 731 277
Website	www.cornfieldschool.org.uk
Email address	office@cornfieldschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2013

Information about this school

- Cornfield School is a special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- All pupils attending Cornfield School have a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Most have additional needs, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum condition (ASC).
- The school is federated with two local special schools. The governing body has an overview of all three schools in the federation, while the management committee specifically oversees Cornfield School's work.
- The school expanded in 2015 to admit pupils into Years 5 and 6.
- Currently, all the pupils are boys. Most are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The school has high levels of mobility. Pupils join the school at different times during their education.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above that found in most schools. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to study vocational courses and to complete work experience in a range of businesses.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The federation employs an independent school improvement partner.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 22 lessons or parts of lessons, including 12 observed jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in and around school and during lessons.
- The inspection team held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, a local authority representative, teachers, members of staff, pupils and members of the school council. A meeting also took place with the chair of the management committee.
- The inspection team took account of the 11 responses to Parent View. They also took account of the views expressed in two responses to the pupil survey and 29 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and attendance and safeguarding policies.
- The inspection team looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. They also listened to pupils in Year 6 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector
Ross MacDonald

Ofsted Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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