

Plumpton Primary School

Southdowns, Plumpton Green, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 3EB

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher provides exceptional leadership for the school. He and his leadership team have rapidly secured substantial and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment during the past year.
- The quality of pupils' learning is significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, standards are rising across the school and are much higher than in 2016.
- One parent's comment about the school's development sums up the views of many, including that of the inspector, 'Hats off to the school – what an absolute turnaround!'
- The executive headteacher and his leadership team have established an enthusiastic, upbeat and hard-working atmosphere in this friendly village school.
- Pupils are keen learners. They speak proudly about their school and about their achievements.
- Pupils behave well. Rigorous safeguarding procedures and strong relationships ensure that pupils are safe and secure.
- Governance is much stronger than at the time of the previous inspection. Governors provide good-quality support and robust challenge for school leaders.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years has improved dramatically. As a result, children are much more effectively prepared for learning in Year 1 than previously. However, there is still more to do to ensure that teaching extends children's learning effectively during their Reception Year, particularly for the most able.
- Pupils make strong progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. However, pupils' progress is slower in science than in other subjects.
- Teaching does not yet deepen and extend pupils' mathematical understanding fully enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching deepens and extends pupils' learning in mathematics consistently well across the school.
- Ensure that children in the Reception Year make even better progress from their starting points, particularly the most able, so that more are working at greater depth by the end of early years.
- Improve the quality of science teaching so that pupils make consistently strong progress in the development of scientific knowledge and skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher leads by example. His extremely high expectations of pupils and staff, combined with his thorough and rigorous approach to school improvement, have been instrumental in securing substantial improvements in the school's work in a relatively short period of time.
- The executive headteacher and advisory headteacher lost no time in tackling weaknesses in the school when they were appointed in September 2016. Since then, they have secured significant developments in the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour. Improvements made during the past year are already thoroughly established and the pace of development continues at a rapid rate.
- The executive headteacher and his leadership team have established a consistent and rigorous system for tracking and checking pupils' progress. This ensures that leaders and teachers have a much more precise view of how well pupils are learning and can respond more quickly to pupils' individual needs.
- The head of school works constructively and effectively with teachers and the senior leadership team to review pupils' work and to develop the quality of teaching.
- The school's membership of the federation has made a positive contribution to school improvement. For example, the school meets regularly with others in the federation to discuss the quality of teaching and learning and to share resources and expertise.
- Middle leaders have made a considerable contribution to improvements in teaching and learning during the past year. They work closely and constructively with their colleagues to check pupils' progress and to identify aspects of teaching in need of further improvement. The mathematics leader has secured particularly impressive developments in the quality of mathematics teaching and in pupils' learning.
- Leaders use funds effectively to support achievement for different groups of pupils. For example, the special needs coordinator ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very well. Furthermore, senior leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils make the same strong progress as their classmates.
- Leaders make very good use of physical education and sports premium to support pupils' health and well-being. For example, the school provides a wide range of sports clubs to appeal to pupils' different interests and abilities. Clubs and competitions make a strong contribution to the school's community atmosphere and to pupils' physical and mental well-being.
- The sports leader provides a strong role model for pupils. The many positive and appreciative comments made by parents and pupils illustrate his success in motivating pupils of all abilities and from a range of backgrounds to engage in sport, including those who have been reluctant to participate in sports activities in the past.
- Parents, staff and governors share the executive headteacher's high aspirations for the school and for every one of its pupils. They have every confidence that the executive headteacher and his leadership team will ensure the school goes from strength to

strength. The local authority shares their confidence. A representative commented, 'We're excited about Plumpton's future!'

- All members of staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire feel that the school has improved since the previous inspection and express confidence in the school's leadership.
- Parents who responded to Parent View, and those who spoke with the inspector, expressed overwhelming support for the school. Many commented on substantial improvements made in the school during the past year. For example, one parent said, 'The school has been on a massive journey. The improvements made in all areas have been staggering', while another commented, 'There's a real energy and enthusiasm driving the school forward.'
- The school celebrates and promotes the school's values very well, including British values. For example, class captains provide strong role models for other pupils and perform their roles of responsibility sensibly and reliably. Pupils' appreciation of the importance of working hard and doing their best is reinforced by the school's use of awards to reward determination, resilience and improvement.
- Visits and visitors contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school while links with schools in other parts of the world help to develop pupils' appreciation of cultures and lifestyles beyond the United Kingdom. Pupils learn about a range of world religions and consider different religions and beliefs respectfully.
- Leaders have made changes to the curriculum during the past year to ensure that teaching fully addresses gaps in pupils' knowledge caused by historic weaknesses in teaching, including in phonics and mathematics. These changes have contributed to marked improvements in pupils' achievement. However, leaders have not yet developed the science curriculum fully enough to ensure that pupils make the same rapid progress in this subject as they do in English and mathematics.

Governance of the school

- The governors have worked effectively with the local authority to appoint a skilful executive headteacher with a proven track record of success in improving schools. They are understandably very pleased with the substantial improvements that the executive headteacher has secured in the school's atmosphere and in its performance.
- Governors appreciate improvements the executive headteacher has brought to development planning, which have enabled them to measure progress in the school more effectively.
- Governors report notable improvements in the quality of communication between parents and school in the past year. They say that parents feel more welcome in the school and that there are many well-attended events, such as class assemblies. The many positive comments made by parents during the inspection support this view.
- The school's very recent membership of the federation and reconstitution of the governing body mean that some aspects of governance are not yet fully established. The chair of governors is quite rightly focusing on developing consistency and teamwork in the newly reconstituted governing body so that all governors have a shared understanding of the school's performance and development priorities.

Governors are now developing a more strategic role across the three schools in the federation.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The advisory headteacher has worked closely with colleagues to ensure that safeguarding procedures continue to be effective during a period of rapid change for the school. She and the leadership team ensure that parents are clear about whom to speak to if they have a safeguarding concern.
- Leaders follow up any issues promptly and seriously. They maintain good links with parents and agencies, including children’s services and local schools, to support pupils’ attendance and well-being.
- Leaders make sure that all members of staff and governors are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. They make good use of training to provide updated information for staff and governors wherever necessary.
- The school’s policies provide good-quality guidance about safeguarding procedures. The policies clearly identify staff and governor responsibilities. Leaders ensure that recruitment checks are complete and up to date. The school site is secure and well maintained.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have made good use of training, as well as expertise within the federation, to improve the quality of teaching substantially during the past year. Teachers have much higher expectations of pupils’ learning, including for the most able pupils.
- Improvements in teaching are securely established in all year groups. Teachers accurately assess pupils’ starting points and make good use of this information to plan the next steps in pupils’ learning.
- Developments in teaching are particularly notable in key stage 2. Here, highly effective teaching has made up for lost time in pupils’ learning. Teachers have rapidly plugged the gaps in pupils’ knowledge caused by historic weaknesses in teaching and by numerous staff changes. As a result, pupils are back on track to achieve well. Pupils say that teaching is more organised than it used to be and that they feel more confident about learning as a result.
- Teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge to reason and to tackle increasingly complex mathematical problems. This has strengthened pupils’ mathematical understanding considerably.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about phonics teaching. They plan activities increasingly well to support pupils’ different needs. Teachers make good use of the school library to foster pupils’ enjoyment of books and provide pupils with plenty of opportunity to read.
- Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities much more effectively than previously. Good-quality communication ensures that teachers and teaching assistants are knowledgeable about pupils’ individual needs.

- Marked improvements in mathematics teaching have made a dramatic difference to pupils' learning. Teachers follow the school's updated calculation policy consistently across the school so that teaching builds pupils' mathematical skills securely and thoroughly. However, teaching does not yet deepen pupils' mathematical understanding as fully as it could, despite improvements.
- The teaching of science is less effective than the teaching of other subjects. Teaching does not build well enough on pupils' starting points in science as they move up through the year groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly.
- Pupils of all ages get on very well together and take good care of each other. For example, during the inspection, a Year 6 pupil reassured a nervous younger child with a gentle hand on shoulder in a Reception Year class assembly.
- Pupils feel that adults listen to their comments and say that their teachers appreciate their views. For example, they like the recent changes leaders have made to lunchtime seating arrangements so that pupils can sit next to their friends while eating lunch.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the work of the school counsellor in helping them to talk about their feelings. They say that she and their teachers help them to think through and sort out any concerns.
- Pupils feel extremely safe in school. Pupils say that the posters around the school and notices on the school's computers provide helpful reminders about safety. They know some of the steps they can take to help them to keep safe, including when using the internet.
- The breakfast club provides a warm, friendly and welcoming environment for those pupils who attend. Pupils happily chat to their friends while eating breakfast and joining in with activities.
- All members of staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire feel that pupils are safe and well behaved.
- Teachers have helped pupils to develop stronger personal skills, such as perseverance and resilience, during the past year. As a result, pupils are much more willing than previously to keep going when tackling demanding activities. These improvements ensure that pupils are increasingly well prepared to learn effectively. However, a small number of pupils still give up too easily when they find the work more challenging.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well throughout the school. They listen carefully to their teachers and treat each other with respect. Pupils' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to their learning and to the school's positive,

welcoming atmosphere.

- Pupils describe marked improvements in behaviour since the executive headteacher joined the school. They say that poor behaviour is rarely a problem now, a view confirmed by parents. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire feel that pupils are safe, happy and well behaved in school.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue at all in school. One commented that, 'Bullying doesn't actually happen here', while another said, 'The school is so small and friendly and everyone knows everyone else.' Discussions with school leaders and school records confirm this positive view.
- While the vast majority of pupils behave very well, a few find it hard to sustain concentration and lose focus during lessons. They do not learn as well as their classmates when this is the case.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Rapid and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching during the past year have ensured that pupils make significantly better progress than in previous years. Pupils have risen very well to the new challenges brought to their learning this year, including the most able pupils.
- Pupils in all year groups make strong progress in English and mathematics from their different starting points. Parents appreciate the substantial improvements made to the quality of pupils' learning. One parent commented, 'I'm amazed by my child's progress in writing and mathematics this year.'
- In the past, the results of the Year 1 phonics check have been consistently higher than the national average. However, in 2016, weaknesses in phonics teaching in recent years led to a dip in outcomes to average levels. Improvements in phonics teaching during the past year have strengthened pupils' reading skills considerably, reversing the decline. Pupils use phonics skills well to tackle unfamiliar words.
- Pupils of all abilities speak with interest about books and authors. For example, one pupil who was engrossed in a book during the lunchtime break spoke to the inspector with great enthusiasm about books by Percy Jackson. The most able pupils read with expression and understanding.
- Pupils make strong progress in developing their writing skills. Improvements in pupils' reading skills have strengthened pupils' spelling so that they write more confidently than previously. Pupils develop a neat and even handwriting style which helps them to write fluently.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well. Like their classmates, they have made stronger progress in the past year because of improvements in teaching, and some have made significant gains in their learning.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils in the school, so their achievement is not reported in detail in this report. They and their classmates learn equally well.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in mathematics was below the national average at the end of key stage 2. This year, pupils have made much stronger progress in mathematics across the school, and particularly during key stage

2. As a result, standards in mathematics are higher in all year groups. Pupils use their mathematical knowledge confidently and with increasing success to reason and to tackle number problems. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could in mathematics because teaching does not extend their learning fully.

- The proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in science in 2016 was average at the end of both key stages. However, the work in pupils' books indicates that pupils have the potential to achieve much more in science than is currently the case.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning in early years has improved during the last year, with notable improvements in the past two terms. Children's work illustrates the strong progress they have made from their starting points, particularly in the development of writing skills. The proportion of children on track to achieve a good level of development in 2017 is higher than in 2016. As a result, children are well placed for the next stage of their learning in key stage 1.
- Leaders have made notable improvements to the way adults use the outdoor area to support children's development. For example, they provide a much wider range of activities than was the case in previous years and have strengthened the focus on children's learning through play. As a result, children learn equally well in the classroom and in the outdoor area.
- Adults have much higher expectations of children's behaviour and learning than at the time of the previous inspection. They plan a wide range of activities with care to interest and engage children in all areas of the early years curriculum. As a result, children are busy and well behaved.
- The outdoor area provides children with an attractive, appealing and well-organised space for children to play and learn. Adults provide tasks which contribute to children's development in all aspects of the early years curriculum, including lots of opportunities for children to write.
- In the past, inaccurate assessments of children's progress led to overgenerous and inaccurate views of children's outcomes at the end of the early years. However, the current early years teacher's accurate assessments provide a reliable view of children's achievement at the end of Reception Year for parents, leaders and Year 1 teachers.
- Teaching does not yet build strongly enough to ensure that all children achieve as well as they should by the end of Reception Year, particularly the most able children. Leaders recognise that the quality of teaching and learning in early years is 'still on a journey'. They are aspirational for the future of early years provision in the school and have clear and carefully considered plans in place to ensure continuing success.

School details

Unique reference number	114410
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10032859

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janice McBrown
Executive Headteacher	Stewart James
Telephone number	01273 890338
Website	www.plumpton.e-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	head@plumpton.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than that found in most schools.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school has worked in collaboration with Barcombe Primary School and Hamsey

Primary School for the past year. The school formally joined the Skylark Federation very recently.

- The executive headteacher oversees the three schools in the Skylark Federation. He divides his time equally between all three schools. The advisory headteacher works alongside the executive headteacher in Plumpton Primary School on two days each week. The head of school is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school.
- The governing body has very recently reconstituted. It oversees the work of all three schools in the federation.
- Almost all teachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in five lessons or parts of lessons, accompanied by the executive headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with the executive headteacher, advisory headteacher, head of school, middle leaders, a local authority representative, teachers, parents and pupils. She also spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. The inspector met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector took account of 45 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as views expressed informally during the school day. She also considered 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including safeguarding policies, the school's improvement plan and information about pupils' progress and attendance.
- The inspector looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. She listened to pupils in Years 1 and 6 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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