

Mile Oak Primary School

Graham Avenue, Portslade, Brighton, East Sussex BN41 2WN

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The interim senior leadership team has provided effective support for leaders across the school. As a result, subject leadership is strengthening. However, many actions are recent and have not been in place long enough for leaders to evaluate or refine them.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, some pupils are not making consistently good progress.
- Time is not always used productively in lessons. Learning time is wasted when tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities. Sometimes pupils take too long to follow instructions.
- The teaching of reading is not sufficiently focused to ensure that pupils systematically develop all the skills they need. In some classes and year groups, pupils do not read a wide enough range of texts to develop a rich vocabulary.
- Some pupils do not regulate their behaviour around the school well enough. Some pupils' work demonstrates a lack of care and poor presentation.
- Outdoor learning in early years is not sufficiently well matched to children's needs. As a result, there is a lack of focus on learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim senior leadership team is highly skilled and effective. Senior leaders have acted swiftly and efficiently to put in place systems to unify the school. As a result, pupils across most year groups are now making more rapid progress from their starting points.
- The staff team is benefiting from appropriate professional development and strong teamwork. Staff are united in the drive for improvement, and the morale of staff is now high.
- The revised curriculum provides a range of exciting and purposeful learning. Pupils are developing the skills they need across all subjects.
- The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is high. Pupils have a strong sense of their community, which is very important to them.
- Governors have the skills needed to fulfil their responsibilities. They have a keen awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the skills of leaders, beyond the interim team, to strengthen and increase their capacity to lead improvement.
- Ensure that all teachers have high expectations so that all pupils make strong progress and take greater care in their work.
- Develop the teaching of reading so that:
 - pupils use appropriate inference and deduction skills
 - pupils' written vocabulary reflects a rich and varied reading diet.
- Ensure that learning opportunities in the early years outdoor area are as effectively planned and supported as those in the classrooms.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Subject leaders are developing the skills they need to drive improvements in their areas. They have been provided with effective support from the interim senior leadership team. As a result, some well-targeted initiatives, for example the introduction of joined handwriting, are having a positive impact across the school. However, much of this work is at an early stage. Consequently, most subject leaders have not yet been able to review, measure or evaluate the impact of their actions fully.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has benefited from working within the local special educational needs (SEN) network. Systems are in place to identify pupils' needs, and a broadening range of support is developing. However, many interventions are relatively recent so their effectiveness has not been fully evaluated.
- At the beginning of the inspection, not all the necessary information was available on the website in relation to the use of the pupil premium funding. However, leaders acted to rectify this and the website is now compliant with Department for Education requirements.
- The local authority has provided a high level of support to the school during an extended period of leadership turbulence. This support has been effective in securing the recent improvements.
- The interim senior leadership team is highly skilled. Together, senior leaders have correctly identified the school's key priorities, which they have focused on with determination and precision. As a result, systems have been revised and refined to improve the safeguarding arrangements for pupils and the curriculum developed to provide them with a broad and balanced education.
- Staff are benefiting from the unifying effect of working together as a team to revise policies and systems. Their views are typified by the comment from a staff member who told inspectors, 'Before, pockets of nice things happened, whereas now it is unified. We were individual entities. Now we are a team.'
- The curriculum has been revised so that pupils develop the range of skills, knowledge and understanding they need, across all subjects. Work in pupils' books showed a wide range of opportunities to investigate and develop their thinking in science and design. Pupils' excitement about scientific learning has been further raised by the arrival of the Science Bus, which was opened during the inspection.
- A rich thread of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education runs throughout the school. Pupils have a strong sense of community, which is demonstrated through such activities as their fundraising for local charities for the homeless. They show a clear understanding and appreciation of a range of faiths and cultures.

Governance of the school

- Governors have the skills they need to work in partnership with leaders on school improvement. They have benefited from increasingly detailed information regarding pupils' progress provided by the interim senior leaders and the assessment leader. This has enabled them to ask more searching questions, holding leaders to account effectively. Some of this information, supporting accountability, is still sparse, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because some interventions are new and have not yet been evaluated.
- Governors have recently recruited a substantive headteacher for the school. During the process of recruitment, they visited the school regularly. Plans are in place to align their future visits with school development priorities.
- Some parents and carers have had concerns about the recent period of leadership change. Governors are aware of these concerns and have taken appropriate actions, for example, by attending the school's parents' evenings to be available for parents.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding audits have been carried out by the interim senior leadership team and governors. These have resulted in refined systems and adaptations to the building, such as the new doors in the front reception area. A new routine is in place for collecting pupils at the end of the day and to ensure that those attending after-school provision are registered systematically. As a result of these improvements, pupils' safety has been enhanced.
- The system to record concerns about pupils has been revised. Staff told inspectors how this has improved the communication of important safeguarding information. One member of staff told inspectors, 'No pupil could slip through the net.' All staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire feel that pupils are safe at school. There is a highly developed culture of safeguarding across the school and a thorough understanding of the processes and protocols needed to keep pupils safe.
- All the necessary recruitment checks are in place. Governors check to ensure that all is as it should be. The training of staff is regular and covers all required areas.
- There are strong welfare systems and good relationships between staff and pupils. These help to create a culture in which pupils' welfare and safeguarding are central to the work of the school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors and/or completed the pupils' survey feel safe. A regular focus on safety within the curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- In some classes and year groups, work is not matched well enough to pupils' needs to support their strong progress. Where this is the case, learning time is not spent productively and pupils sometimes take too long to follow instructions.
- The teaching of reading does not systematically challenge pupils. Too often, tasks

require little reading and do not build the skills that pupils need to develop their comprehension beyond the basic.

- Phonics is taught systematically and effectively. As a result, younger pupils demonstrate confidence in early reading and writing. However, the teaching of spelling has a variable impact on pupils' writing further up the school. Pupils' spelling choices are sometimes haphazard.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most teachers use this to plan appropriate work for all pupils. This provides pupils with the challenge they need to deepen their understanding and make progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants work effectively across the school to provide tailored support for pupils, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Mathematics teaching develops pupils' understanding of concepts well. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to extend their thinking and develop their mathematical reasoning. As a result, pupils are capable and confident mathematicians who respond well to the systematic challenge provided in most lessons.
- Pupils' writing is developed well across the curriculum. Pupils write for a range of purposes and in a range of styles, for example, writing a script for a weather forecast presentation. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy these opportunities for writing, especially when writing is linked to history or geography. Teachers are developing opportunities for pupils to use mathematics across the curriculum. For example, some pupils collated data about their breathing during different types of exercise in physical education. However, these opportunities are less well integrated into the curriculum than those for writing.
- Most pupils enjoy their learning, which they approach with enthusiasm and positivity. They are not afraid of making mistakes, and one told inspectors, 'It's always best to have a go because you'll learn from it.' However, where learning is not matched well to pupils' needs, some struggle to maintain their attention and do not take appropriate care with their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Some pupils do not take sufficient pride in their work. This is typified by careless mistakes and presentation standards which are below those expected for their age. As a result, some pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they should be.
- The school's welfare systems are well developed and support pupils and their families effectively. The school is a caring environment, and the welfare of pupils and their families is of paramount importance. The welfare team works effectively with pupils, their families and outside agencies to ensure that whenever a little extra help is needed it is available.
- Parents appreciate the range of care and support available at the school. Most parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are

well cared for. One parent's free-text comment on Parent View typified the views of many in describing the pastoral care as 'faultless'. Another said, 'We have had a tough year and the school could not have been more supportive.'

- Pupils who spoke to inspectors told them that the school is a 'happy place'. They were clear that bullying is rare and that when it does happen it is sorted out quickly. Pupils are motivated by the school's system of champion shirts, and one told inspectors, 'When you get a shirt, it makes you feel really proud about what you have done.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. During the inspection, some pupils demonstrated a lack of self-regulation around the school. While their behaviour was not dangerous or disruptive, it meant that the school was not always an orderly environment.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. However, some pupils do not display independent learning behaviours. They can be slow to follow adults' direction and struggle to stay on task during independent activities. When this is the case, it is often linked to learning tasks which do not match pupils' needs well enough.
- The attendance of pupils has improved and is currently in line with the national average. Interim senior leaders have introduced new systems to monitor attendance. These systems allow bespoke support to be put in place for families who have complex needs which are affecting attendance. While leaders acknowledge that there is still more to be done, there is evidence that this support is raising attendance levels of pupils who were previously persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The school's own assessment information and work in pupils' books show that progress across the school from starting points is variable. Similarly, there is considerable variability in rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities when compared to those of other pupils. However, many of the interventions designed to meet their needs and accelerate progress have not been in place long enough for their impact to be evaluated fully.
- Pupils' reading journals do not demonstrate appropriate learning activities to develop their wider reading skills. Pupils who read to inspectors enjoy reading, but some cannot use contextual clues when tackling more complex words, indicating a weak understanding of the text.
- Most pupils' writing books show progress from their starting points at the beginning of the year. Pupils write competently, using accurate sentence construction and appropriate features for a wide range of purposes. In some year groups, notably Year 5, pupils use a breadth of well-chosen vocabulary. However, this is not the case across the school and vocabulary choices are sometimes unadventurous. Pupils in key stage 2 do not demonstrate consistent spelling choices or take enough care with their spelling. A recent whole-school focus has resulted in improved handwriting.

- Pupils' mathematics books showed good progress from starting points. Pupils have a secure understanding of number and basic computational processes. They have frequent opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning and relish mathematical challenges.
- In the 2017 end of key stage 2 national tests, lower proportions of pupils attained the expected standards in reading and mathematics than the national averages. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing was in line with the national average. The attainment of current key stage 2 pupils is mostly improving when measured against the age-related expectations for each year group and subject.
- In the 2017 end of key stage 1 national assessments, a lower proportion of pupils than seen nationally attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The attainment of current key stage 1 pupils is mostly improving in relation to age-related expectations.
- The school's own assessment information for current pupils and work in books show that a higher proportion of pupils are now attaining at the higher standard than in the 2017 end of key stage assessments, across the curriculum.
- In the 2017 Year 1 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard was above the national figure. Current pupils are making good progress in acquiring phonics skills. This is because phonics is taught systematically and well.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Outdoor learning is not sufficiently developed to extend learning from the classroom well. As a result, children enjoy the activities, and play is supported, but there is a lack of focus on learning.
- Assessment systems have been recently revised, and the systematic collection of the evidence of children's learning across the seven areas of learning and development is gradually becoming routine practice. Up until now, planning for children's next steps in learning too often relied on individual staff members' knowledge of children, rather than shared assessment information.
- The classrooms provide a range of independent and directed activity to enable children to develop and practise their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Children are independent learners. They work and play together well. They enjoy their activities, such as organising races or developing 'shows'. They are kind to each other.
- Adults are highly skilled in supporting children in their play. For example, some children were making music, and the adult helped them to think about different types of music and the movements which might go with each. The focus then moved to the sea creature theme, with the adult asking, 'Would a jellyfish and a shark have the same music?' Children respond well to such prompts from adults.
- The early years leader has an informed understanding of the development needs of groups of children and has taken steps to introduce appropriate support. For example, strategies have been put in place specifically to develop children's speaking and

listening skills. She has ensured that all necessary training is in place for the staff team.

- Parents are offered a wide range of opportunities to engage with their children's learning in early years. Parents who spoke to inspectors and completed the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, value the helpful information they are provided with and the activities that support children's transition into school, such as the play picnics.

School details

Unique reference number	114430
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10046032

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	516
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Jennings
Interim Executive Headteacher	Rachel Simmonds
Telephone number	01273 294880
Website	www.mileoakschool.co.uk
Email address	rachelsimmonds@mileoak.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 September 2014

Information about this school

- The school is currently supported by an interim senior leadership team provided by the local authority. The interim executive headteacher provides overall direction for the school, supported by the leadership of three part-time acting heads of school.
- Governors have recruited a substantive headteacher who is due to take up post in September 2018.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard for the end of key stage 2, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is broadly in line with the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have support for SEN and/or disabilities is higher than average, although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is lower than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with staff, governors, parents and leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including development plans, minutes of meetings, and progress information.
- Inspectors observed pupils around the school and in their classes. Some observations were jointly conducted with senior leaders. They met with groups of pupils to obtain their views on the school, look at their work and hear them read.
- They met with parents on the playground, and considered 58 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, including 30 free-text responses. Inspectors also considered 31 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey and 52 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Rome	Ofsted Inspector
Matt Batchelor	Ofsted Inspector

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