



Park Mead Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114408
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 279381
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 12 October 2005
Reporting inspector Martin Kerly RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Upper Dicker
School category	Community		Nr. Hailsham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		East Sussex BN27 3QP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01323 844 247
Number on roll	89	Fax number	01323 844 247
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Lumsden
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Mears

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 12 October 2005 - 12 October 2005	Inspection number 279381
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

In this small school, with four mixed-age classes, numbers have declined recently but have now stabilised.

The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is greater than the national average. The large majority of pupils are from White British families with a few from minority ethnic groups. Pupils live in the village of Upper Dicker, neighbouring villages and rural areas and from the outskirts of the town of Hailsham.

The school has been through a period of staffing instability and a major building project during the last year. A new headteacher took up her permanent post at the beginning of this term, following a year as acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school makes satisfactory provision for its pupils and provides sound value for money. Despite recent staffing uncertainties within the leadership team, the school has made good progress in addressing weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Following the appointment of a new permanent headteacher, it is securely placed to continue to improve, with mainly satisfactory procedures for checking its own performance. It has an accurate view of its own effectiveness in most aspects of its work. Better use needs to be made of data to track the academic performance of pupils, set targets and check that all groups of pupils are achieving equally well. The role of subject leaders needs to be strengthened to support the headteacher in gaining an overview of performance in all subjects.

In the last two years, standards have been broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good by all children in Reception and by those pupils with learning difficulties in all classes. The achievement of the more able pupils is not good enough, with too few reaching high standards by the end of Year 6. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, teachers do not always give their pupils sufficiently differing levels of work to match the wide range of abilities in their mixed-age classes. As a consequence some, particularly the more able, are not challenged enough. Pupils in all classes make good progress in their personal development. Almost all behave well and the care and guidance they receive from adults is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work is matched more accurately to pupils' different levels of ability with greater challenges for those who are more able
- Strengthen the role of subject leadership in order to provide a clear view of standards and those aspects in need of development in each subject across the school
- Use information and data from national tests more effectively to track individual pupils' progress, identify emerging patterns and set targets for all year groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

With few pupils in each year group, standards fluctuate considerably from one year to the next. Pupils enter the Reception Year with a particularly wide range of abilities but in most years, their overall abilities are broadly in line with national expectations. Children achieve well during their time in Reception; by the end of the year, almost all are in line with national expectations and some above in most areas of learning. By the end of Year 2, standards attained are in line with the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. By the end of Year 6, standards are in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. In the national tests in the summer of 2005, all the Year 6 pupils attained the nationally expected level in English as did the large majority in mathematics and science. This indicates good achievement

by those pupils with special educational needs and satisfactory achievement by those of average ability. Some of the more able pupils did not achieve as well as they should, with relatively few pupils exceeding national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and too few in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. A significant proportion of these more able pupils did not achieve their targets by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All members of staff work together throughout the school day to promote personal development effectively. With small classes, pupils are known very well by the teachers, who share similar expectations of behaviour. As a result, almost all pupils behave well. A very small minority occasionally disrupts those around them. A few parents have identified this as a problem and inspectors agree; these incidents are usually managed effectively. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The school's work to improve attendance has been acknowledged by the local authority as an example of good practice. The development of work skills is satisfactory, having been strengthened by recent improvements in pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) which was previously reported as a weakness.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains good. Pupils report enjoying almost all lessons and talk enthusiastically about the wide range of activities and visits out of school. The school has successfully promoted pupils' awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles regarding diet and exercise and has received the Healthy Schools Award.

Pupils value taking responsibilities around the school and the members of the school council have helped to instigate improvements to playground equipment and involvement in charity appeals. The school plans to include pupils in Years 1 and 2 who are not yet directly represented in the council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst there is some good teaching, the quality is variable and there is one significant aspect in need of improvement. In too many lessons across the school, teachers do not plan sufficiently for the wide range of abilities in their class. Often all the pupils are given the same work and so it is not matched to the needs of particular groups. This limits the rate of learning, especially for the more able pupils who are not fully challenged and could achieve more. Teachers make good use of a skilful team of teaching assistants who are involved in planning activities. These teaching assistants work effectively with small groups and individual pupils and this contributes well to the good learning by pupils with learning difficulties. The small class sizes enable all pupils to receive substantial teacher support which helps their learning as do their

positive attitudes. The use of the new interactive whiteboards is enhancing the pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory during lessons and at the end of units of work. In Reception, there is careful and systematic observation of children's progress. Here there is a balance between teacher-directed activities and times when children work independently and this leads to effective learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all subjects of the National Curriculum. The way that it is planned ensures that there is no repetition or gaps in pupils' learning even though they are in mixed-age classes. Particular strengths in the curriculum include the wide range of additional activities outside the school day, visits beyond the school and joint activities with other local schools. These successfully overcome constraints often experienced in small schools. A high proportion of part-time teachers with expertise in areas such as music and French benefit the pupils.

The school has made very good progress in addressing most of the curricular weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The provision for ICT has improved significantly, with good opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills to support their work in other subjects. The new hall has enabled gymnastics and dance to be covered. However, the recently-constructed outdoor area off the Reception room is not yet fully developed, with insufficient cover and only a limited range of activities set up for the children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a very strong sense of the whole staff team working effectively towards the good care, guidance and support of all pupils. Consequently pupils feel secure and protected. This is endorsed overwhelmingly by parents. Those pupils who are especially vulnerable are well supported throughout the school day, enabling them to be fully integrated and feel valued. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early, and well planned programmes of support are carefully implemented, successfully linking with outside agencies. Pupils are reasonably clear about their learning targets and how the feedback they receive, both orally and from teachers' marking, enables them to improve. The annual reports to parents include targets for improvement but do not include sufficiently clear judgements on how well pupils are doing in each subject.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

After a period of uncertainty, the overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The newly appointed headteacher took up her post at the beginning of September following a year as acting head during the secondment of the previous headteacher. She demonstrates a clarity of purpose and has made a good start in establishing a clear vision for the school, building on its strengths, with a determination to raise standards further by improving provision. However, other leadership roles

need strengthening to support the headteacher in checking on the performance of the school. For example, subject leaders need to gain a clearer view of standards and the quality of provision in their subjects in order to help raise achievement. The acting assistant headteacher role currently includes deputising in the absence of the headteacher. Governors are actively considering options for restructuring the management team, recognising the need to share some responsibilities across the staff team. The headteacher has established an effective school improvement plan, with well chosen priorities based on an accurate review of the school's strengths and weaknesses. One of these is rightly to develop subject leadership.

The headteacher has managed the major rebuilding programme well, minimising the disruption to teaching and learning whilst maintaining the safety of all. She has also started to improve the inadequate arrangements for using data to track the performance of pupils. The present system does not include targets for all pupils for the end of each year nor draw out overall patterns in progress, to check, for example, how well the more able pupils are doing.

Governors are actively involved in the school. They are well led by the chair and vice-chair each of whom has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables governors to offer an effective balance of support and challenge.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you probably remember, a team of two inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. Thank you for making us feel welcome. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work.

We are pleased to say there are many things that are good about your school, but there are also some things that need to get better. Here are some of the most important things that we found to be good:

almost all of you behave well and care for each other

those of you who find your work difficult are helped really well to make good progress

the teachers ensure that you have lots of interesting experiences in lessons, after school and on visits around the area

the new buildings have made a big difference

everyone who works in the school is very caring and supportive, helping to keep you safe and feel good about being in school

your new headteacher has lots of ideas about how to improve your school and the governors are working well behind the scenes to help her with these ideas.

We have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to work on these things together:

make sure teachers give you all work that is neither too hard nor too easy

check that someone knows all about what is happening in each subject

use all the information they collect about how well you are doing to help you do even better.