



South Malling CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114509
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 279399
Inspection dates 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Steffi Penny HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Lewes
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		East Sussex BN7 2HS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01273 473016
Number on roll	219	Fax number	01273 473016
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Doctor Wilf Wilde
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Bryan Meyer

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average-sized school located in the county town of Lewes that draws its pupils mainly from the local mixed housing estate. Most pupils are of White British heritage and an average number are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly more than the national average and the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is well below that seen nationally. Nearly all pupils speak English fluently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school judges itself similarly, recognising what it needs to do to improve standards. The school uses all resources well and provides satisfactory value for money.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, as is the capacity of the school to improve further. Satisfactory systems are in place to check on the effectiveness of the school, but much of what is being done is in the early stages. The weaknesses that remain, especially in pupils' writing, have been recognised and a good plan exists to develop this area. As a result, pupils' written work and reading have improved.

More accurate assessments and improved use of data are helping teachers and senior managers to set and monitor challenging targets for pupils in every class. Consequently, progress is satisfactory overall and improving fast. Information on pupils' progress year by year is used well by middle managers to pick up those who may need extra help but not to check whether all pupils are making progress at a consistent rate.

There was a sudden drop in performance in 2005, but this does not reflect what had been an upward trend in a previously high achieving school. The school is beginning to turn this drop around. There is now a common sense of purpose with more governors taking an active role in the school. They need further guidance on how best to help the school improve.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress in their learning. Except for their writing, which is underdeveloped, the skills that pupils have at the end of the Reception Year are in line with the goals for learning for their age.

Parents hold the school in high regard and are very happy with what it offers. Pupils very much enjoy being at school and their behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes and feel safe and valued as individuals.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of all aspects of writing throughout the school
- strengthen the role of middle managers so that roles and responsibilities are clearer and more accountable
- develop the ability of all governors to be able to challenge the school where necessary and to hold it more effectively to account for its performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is currently satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Children enter the school with skills that are slightly below those expected for their age. During their time in Reception, they make satisfactory progress. However, they start Year 1 with lower standards in writing than seen nationally.

Standards in English and mathematics at age seven have been consistently just below the national average during the past three years. At age eleven, standards in English, mathematics and science were consistently above national results. In 2005, there was a sudden drop, particularly in English, and less so in mathematics, representing underachievement. Work seen in pupils' books and school records shows that standards in the current Year 6 have improved and that pupils are making satisfactory progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the good support they receive in class. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning at home and through their very strong support for the school. Since the last report, pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and is now satisfactory.

Children in Reception and pupils in Years 2 and 6 are on course to meet the challenging targets set for the end of the current academic year. However, writing across the school remains a weakness. Pupils' reading skills are average for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and attendance is satisfactory. Pupils say they enjoy school very much, have good attitudes to learning and are well behaved. Pupils of all ages are polite and friendly to each other and to adults and feel that the school is a very caring community. They are very confident that adults will provide the help and guidance they need, both in lessons and in response to personal needs. For example, pupils have no significant concerns about bullying, recognising that good procedures exist to ensure their safety.

The spiritual, social and moral development of pupils is good. All pupils in Year 6 have specific jobs within the school community, including one pupil acting as the headteacher's personal assistant. Cultural development is also good, particularly in relation to the creative arts. However, the multicultural dimension is less strong. The diversity of faiths and cultures in England is not strongly reflected in the school environment.

There is a vocal school council and all pupils have easy access to the headteacher and have good opportunities to share their views with senior staff, although not with governors.

Healthy lifestyles are embraced by pupils through enthusiastic engagement in physical activities. Whilst pupils have the basic skills for their future lives, there are missed opportunities for developing their awareness of the world of work. There are good relationships with the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are improving fast. Several good examples of pupils evaluating their own work were seen during the inspection, a process that the school is developing. All pupils have clear English and mathematics targets that they know and understand. Good input from the learning support assistants enables pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties to make satisfactory progress. Marking is regular and, in the best instances, shows pupils how they can improve the quality of their work.

Planning is thorough and assessment of how much pupils have learned is generally evaluated well. In an excellent literacy lesson, the teacher used a variety of techniques to help the pupils understand how adverts can promote and persuade. This was done by creating a seductive radio advert and using friends to help improve the choosing of enticing words. Good use was also made of the interactive whiteboard, with pupils freely adding words to a word bank. There are still some areas where teaching needs significant improvement, for example, in all aspects of writing and where teachers and support staff do not manage pupils' concentration effectively and this gets in the way of the pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets national requirements. Over the last few years, an accelerated learning programme has been integrated into the curriculum to improve pupils' motivation and to raise standards. This has helped the school to identify the different ways that individual pupils prefer to learn, but it is too early to measure the impact of this. In the best lessons, teachers use a number of techniques to get pupils' attention, for example, using jingles and short songs that they respond to, knowing that this means a change in the lesson activity. The use of hand gestures by the teachers and simple signs effectively reinforce good behaviour and listening skills. Pupils make the most progress when they use the local environment and work across subjects. Such activities include pond-dipping, investigating mini-beasts and analysing social issues in Lewes as part of literacy work linked with healthy living and the personal, social and health education programme.

Sports play an integral part in developing healthy lifestyles and a competitive spirit. There are several sporting clubs and pupils enjoy and participate in good numbers. Music is strong feature of the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their choir and drumming group. Music is frequently playing in the background in class, creating a calm and welcoming environment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Staff make their expectations of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and effort very clear and work successfully to create a positive ethos in which all pupils are able to flourish. This means that new pupils and those with particular needs are cared for very well. They and their parents appreciate this very much; several parents said 'the school is good at identifying and celebrating strengths and treating each child as an individual... those with specific needs are not singled out'. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure that visits outside the school are conducted safely and there are effective child protection procedures in place.

Teachers track pupils' progress and identify those that need extra help. Pupils receive good support but middle managers do not check closely enough the consistency of their progress to identify their needs quickly enough. Several initiatives are in place for pupils who are gifted and talented and the school works effectively with a cluster group of schools to support joint projects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In the main, the school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. Priorities for the future are well focused and well planned and the school is on target to make further improvement. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is focused on improving pupils' achievements through developing basic skills and by giving them experiences which extend their personal development. The school recognises that other leadership and management roles are less developed. It has plans to make other roles and responsibilities clearer and more accountable. Accommodation and resources are used well and managed effectively. Good links with external agencies enrich and support the work of the school. The vast majority of parents and pupils feel fully involved and informed by the school. One parent said 'it is a school that is inclusive, that knows and serves its local community well'. Inspection evidence supports these views. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils who find it difficult to concentrate in class are taught within the school. The school has a good relationship with the local community and is held in high esteem. One of the reasons for this is that it is a venue for community events, having a considerable number of lettings at rates that substantiate the inclusive ethos it holds dear.

The underachievement of pupils in 2005 was unexpected and at that time the governing body was not proactive enough in seeking information. This has changed, and since September many governors have taken more active roles. However, many lack training in their roles and in particular how they can all help the headteacher move the school forward.

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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
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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	3	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	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	3	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

Thank you for sharing your views of the school with us when we visited a little while ago. We really enjoyed our time with you, because everyone was so very friendly and made it easy for us to do our job. This letter is to let you know what your school does well and how you, your teachers and governors can help your school to be even better.

This is what we found out:

- Your school is a very friendly place and you behave well.
- You appreciate all of the extra activities that the school provides for you.
- The school does a good job of encouraging you to become confident in all of the things you do.
- Staff work hard to make lessons interesting and you do particularly well in lessons where you are active and have a range of activities.
- Your headteacher and staff work well together to make a calm and happy atmosphere in the school.
- Your school council lets you have a say in how the school runs, and it has some real improvements to show for its work.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this, we think that these are the things the school needs to do next:

- You need to work harder to improve your writing.
- Teachers need to make sure that that all of you do your very best all the time.
- Governors need to come and see you more to check on how everyone is doing, and help more with planning the school's future.

Thank you again for helping us to have such a great visit to your school.

Wishing you a happy and successful future.