



Sussex Road Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118286
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280285
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sussex Road
School category	Community		Tonbridge
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Kent TN9 2TP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 352367
Number on roll	387	Fax number	01732 352367
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Simon Southworth
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr Nigel Amos

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 8 February 2006 - 9 February 2006	Inspection number 280285
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school situated close to the centre of Tonbridge. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than in most schools. Pupils come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. Most are White British with approximately 6% from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than that in most schools. There has been a high turnover of staff and governors during the past two years, which has interrupted the pace of development.

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 judges its own effectiveness as good, based on its success in creating a stimulating environment for learning where pupils are enthusiastic and develop good all round personal qualities. Whilst acknowledging these strengths, the inspector's view is that the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This is because it is not yet effective enough in promoting good achievement. Achievement for the majority of pupils is satisfactory, but pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not do well enough and have to catch up in Years 3 to 6. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress overall and do particularly well in their personal and social development. However most do not reach the goals expected by the end of the year due to their low starting point.

Teaching is satisfactory and has some good features, such as the way teachers generate enthusiasm for learning. The quality of marking of pupils' work is variable and it does not always give pupils a realistic view of their achievement or show them how to improve. Pupils enjoy learning because the school provides a rich, varied and exciting curriculum. The good systems to ensure pupils' health and well-being help them to feel safe and well cared for. However, pupils with learning difficulties do not make enough progress as the targets set for them are not sharp enough and work planned does not always match their needs.

The leadership and management are satisfactorily focused on raising standards but have not ensured that teachers' expectations and the targets for pupils to achieve are high enough in Years 1 and 2. Improvements in teaching and in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), together with recent initiatives to raise standards in writing and mathematics, demonstrate that the school has the potential for further improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards are raised in Years 1 and 2 by setting higher expectations and more challenging targets for pupils
- Ensure that the targets set for pupils with learning difficulties and the work that is planned for them all take good account of their specific needs
- Give all pupils clearer guidance on what they need to do to improve their work

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory for the majority of pupils and standards are broadly in line with national averages. Children start school with below average standards. They make sound progress in Reception but, although they do particularly well in their personal and social development most do not reach the goals set for the end of the year in other areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, pupils do not do well enough in order to reach the standards expected by the age of 7. This is because they often do not have sufficiently challenging targets to improve their learning. However, they make up lost ground in Years 3 to 6, and reach broadly average standards by the time they leave.

Pupils with learning difficulties do not make enough progress because their individual targets are not clear enough and work is not always carefully matched to their needs.

In mathematics, standards have been below average for some time and are now showing signs of improvement. This is a direct result of initiatives introduced by the school to extend pupils' skills in calculation and problem solving. Standards in writing are also rising in Years 3 to 6, where higher attaining pupils are doing particularly well. The school has implemented a number of strategies to improve the style and content of pupils' written work, as well as spelling and punctuation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school justifiably prides itself on nurturing pupils' personal development and well-being, which are good. Pupils really enjoy learning and appreciate the exciting range of activities that the school provides. They talk with enthusiasm about their favourite lessons and the other exciting things teachers arrange for them. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They appreciate the variety of cultures in society and develop a good understanding of different faiths and customs. Pupils work and play together safely with very few instances of bullying or anti-social behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils develop healthy lifestyles through a good range of sporting activities and understand the importance of a healthy diet. They contribute willingly to the school community, taking on responsibilities, as 'buddies' and members of the Eco Club, for example. The school council has been successful in introducing new ideas, such as better play equipment for breaktimes and improvements in the library. Managing these projects has also helped pupils to understand how to work to a budget. Pupils' involvement in a number of initiatives, both in the local community and further afield, extends their awareness of the needs of others. They participate with enthusiasm in various fund raising activities and manage projects, which helps to prepare them soundly for later life, by contributing to the development of their skills in mathematical calculations and problem solving.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching is mostly satisfactory, there is clear evidence to indicate that it is improving as a result of training and sharing good practice. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have not always been high enough and this has led to underachievement, especially in Years 1 and 2. Although this is beginning to improve as a result of more rigorous target setting procedures, there is as yet limited evidence of its impact on pupils' learning. Teachers get on very well with the pupils and are particularly successful in engaging pupils' interest and harnessing their enthusiasm. As a result, pupils work with concentration and are keen to learn. For example, Year 5 pupils were happy to

spend an extra 10 minutes finishing a mathematics task in their lunch break. ICT is much improved since the last inspection, and is used well to enliven and support learning.

Teaching assistants are deployed well during whole-class teaching to keep track of which pupils are answering the teacher's questions. This ensures that every child takes a full part in the lesson. Teaching assistants also give effective support to pupils who need help with their learning, but these pupils nonetheless make less progress than others because work is not always matched closely enough to their needs.

Although there are examples of good marking that gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, there is too much marking that offers only encouragement rather than helpful feedback. A few teachers' marking gives indiscriminate praise that bears little relationship to the quality or quantity of work done.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has been very successful in creating a rich curriculum that engages pupils' interest and contributes strongly to their personal development and their enjoyment of school. Classroom displays are vibrant and stimulating. They help to create an environment where pupils are keen to learn. The range of subjects covered in Years 3 to 6 is much broader than in most other schools and includes, for example, French and Spanish. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of clubs and additional activities.

Welldeveloped links between subjects provide opportunities for pupils to learn in more detail and depth about the topics covered. Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing and mathematical problem-solving skills are improving due to the school's participation in local and national initiatives. The reception curriculum is soundly planned to incorporate all areas of learning under umbrella themes, but play activities are not always organised well enough to ensure that all children are learning and playing purposefully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is satisfactory overall. Welfare and first aid arrangements are good but the academic support given to pupils is not as strong. The consistent approach taken to rewards and sanctions has enabled the school to establish an orderly community where pupils are helped to feel secure and to grow in confidence. There are good arrangements in place to support looked after children and those identified as being at risk. Pupils are given targets to help improve their learning in English and mathematics but they are not all aware of what their targets are. Pupils with learning difficulties have individual and, in some cases, shared education plans, but these are not always tightly enough focused on each child's specific learning needs. Consequently these pupils make less progress than others as they move through the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although there are several strong features in the school's leadership and management, its overall quality is satisfactory. Senior managers have successfully created a happy school where pupils enjoy a rich variety of learning experiences and opportunities in a vibrant and stimulating environment. They have also remedied most of the weaknesses identified by the last inspection. However, the school has not fully harnessed the pupils' enthusiasm for learning to ensure that all are achieving the highest standards of which they are capable.

Following a number of staff changes, the new leadership and curriculum teams are already beginning to have an impact on raising achievement, notably in writing and mathematics. Improved procedures for staff and governors to monitor the school's performance are leading to greater rigour and more accurate self-evaluation. However, the main focus has been on Years 3 to 6 and insufficient attention has been given to considering ways to raise achievement in Years 1 and 2.

The school takes good account of parents' and pupils' views when deciding its priorities for improvement and governors and staff are becoming increasingly involved in determining the pace and direction of development. Senior managers have acknowledged the need to improve their use of data to track pupils' progress throughout the school and have already done much to hone their skills of analysis and interpretation. However, this has not been sufficiently thorough in Reception and Years 1 and 2.

The school is aware that it needs to address the root causes of underachievement. Now that there is a renewed vision for the future, which is shared by all staff, strong teamwork and good support from a number of external advisers, the school has the capacity and the will to increase the momentum of improvement.

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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	4	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	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?	3	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

We very much enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you for being so friendly and helpful. The inspectors enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

What we liked most about your school:

- You really enjoy learning and take part in lots of activities with enthusiasm
- You behave well, help each other and enjoy taking responsibility
- Your teachers plan lots of exciting activities for you to do, and you get the chance to learn French and Spanish and to take part in special events
- All of the adults take very good care of you and make you feel safe

What we have asked your school to do now

- Help those of you in Years 1 and 2 to reach higher standards in your work by giving you harder challenges
- Make sure that you all understand what you need to do to improve your work
- Help those who find learning difficult, by giving them work that helps them to make better progress

We are sure you will continue to work hard and enjoy your time at Sussex Road School.