

West Blatchington Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114425
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	289904
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathryn Wilson
Headteacher	Carol Grey
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Hangleton Way Hove BN3 8BN
Telephone number	01273 770777
Fax number	01273 739755

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

West Blatchington Infant School is smaller than average. It serves an area with some pockets of social deprivation and many of its pupils are entitled to free school meals. While the majority of pupils are White British, a higher-than-average and growing proportion are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language, although few are early-stage learners of English. More pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number with a statement of special educational needs is very high because the school houses a special unit for up to eight autistic (ASD) pupils. The school holds a Quality Mark awarded by the Basic Skills Agency for its work in literacy and numeracy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Blatchington Infants is a good school. It is improving, and has a number of outstanding qualities and good capacity to improve further.

Achievement is good. From low overall starting points, the children make a good start in the Foundation Stage, doing particularly well in developing their personal, social and communication skills, which are initially weak areas. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils continue to make good progress so that standards are average by the time they leave and they have caught up with pupils of their age nationally.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because they receive excellent care, support and guidance and because of the school's purposeful environment for learning. As one pupil said, 'The school is about getting along with each other', a view reflected in the universally positive responses of parents and carers. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are exemplary and pupils learn very well how to lead healthy, safe and rewarding lives.

The inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language is outstanding. The autism unit is highly effective and is valued as a benefit to all. Its pupils are skilfully integrated into the main school, enriching their learning and that of other pupils. One parent wrote: 'The ASD unit is fantastic. My daughter has benefited so much in her first year at this school and has achieved many goals which we thought would be impossible.' In supporting the unit, as in its work overall, the school works exceptionally well with partner agencies such as the local authority.

The curriculum is outstandingly well adapted to pupils' needs. Exciting experiences reinforce learning by linking subjects and supporting areas where pupils have weaker skills such as communication. Teaching and learning are good, with outstanding features, including the care given to meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities in lessons. While pupils' progress is monitored well over time and teachers use this information well to set pupils' targets, the pupils are not always involved enough in deciding what to do next to meet their targets.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She is increasingly well supported by the deputy headteacher and other staff in positions of responsibility. She sets a clear direction for the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with notable impact made on the pupils' personal development by improving the care, support, guidance and curriculum provided. The headteacher and her colleagues know what needs to be improved next. Priorities in development planning reflect these intentions well overall but some of the actions noted, as well as some of the means specified to check their impact on pupils' learning, are not precise enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils more in deciding how to improve their work.
- Ensure all priorities in school improvement planning, and the criteria for success, are precise, measurable and sharply focused on outcomes for the pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children join the school with attainment below that expected for their ages. Personal, social and emotional development is weak, as are skills in speaking and listening, because a high proportion of the children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or speak English as an additional language. Progress in the required areas of learning is good in the Nursery and Reception classes so that the children begin to make up the lost ground, although attainment remains below expectations by the end of the Reception Year. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils continue to make good progress, and particularly so in the vital areas of speaking and listening, so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Results in Year 2 national assessments have fluctuated slightly in recent years. However, challenging targets are met, achievement is improving and the fluctuations reflect the differing ability levels within each year group. Pupils with additional learning needs such as learning difficulties and/or disabilities or speakers of English as an additional language make outstanding progress because of the excellent support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance has improved sharply in the last year and is now average. They have excellent attitudes to learning, behave outstandingly well and form very positive relationships with each other and with adults. Their excellent spiritual, moral and social development is evident, for example, in the real concern shown for each other if a fellow pupil has nobody to play with at breaktime. The pupils develop a good understanding of the increasingly diverse cultures within the school population and within wider society. They feel very safe at school, knowing how to behave safely and why it is important. Their response to the school's work to help them lead healthy lives is enthusiastic: 'Fruit and veg make you healthy and stop you getting tired', as one pupil said. The pupils respond equally well to opportunities to take exercise. They make an excellent contribution to the local community, for example, through raising funds for charity. Older pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community by willingly taking on responsibilities such as on the school council or as playground buddies. Younger pupils are keen to do the same but have fewer opportunities to contribute. The pupils' excellent social development and good progress in literacy and numeracy prepare them well for their future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The majority of lessons have a clear purpose. They build well on pupils' prior learning to meet their differing needs and offer stimulating activities with an emphasis on practical tasks which pupils enjoy. Opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology are good and encourage them to be independent in their learning. There are also good opportunities for speaking and listening which contribute well to the pupils' communication skills. In a minority of lessons, group-based tasks, following on from whole-class learning, do not reinforce or extend the learning objectives of the lesson. Most pupils know their learning targets and teachers usefully refer to these in lessons. However, the pupils are not involved consistently

enough in deciding how the targets relate to their work or what to do to move on. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils speaking English as an additional language is outstanding. Expert teaching and well-trained teaching assistants ensure that excellent progress is made by pupils in the unit. The integration of these pupils into mainstream classes is also excellent and of value to other pupils. For example, all pupils benefit from the use of visual prompts and Makaton symbols that are integral to the learning of pupils from the unit.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Exciting links are made between subjects to break down artificial barriers, support literacy and numeracy and sustain pupils' interest. For example, a focus on forces in science may also involve model making, geography and visits to the park. The curriculum is very well adapted to meet the pupils' diverse needs, including those of pupils with autism or those whose first language is not English; for the latter, key materials are made available in their home language. Outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage is a strength, supporting pupils in developing social skills and broadening their knowledge of the world around them. Enrichment of learning through extra-curricular activities is good. Support for pupils in leading healthy and safe lives is very well planned and includes, for example, topics on healthy eating, a wide range of physical activities such as 'huff and puff' and road safety input from expert visitors. Excellent provision for personal, social and citizenship education contributes hugely to pupils' personal development. They have many opportunities to discuss feelings, share concerns and learn about rights and responsibilities, for example, through circle time, assemblies and other opportunities for reflection. Pupils learn of the diversity of world cultures and faiths through a growing range of visitors and visits to places of worship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school knows and cares for its pupils outstandingly well, and they in turn speak highly of the way they are looked after. There is always someone to turn to and who will listen, and they know adults will help them if they have any problems. Staff sensitively balance care with high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Their expectations are consistently reinforced and good behaviour is readily celebrated. Excellent support for the pupils to attend well is having a positive impact. Procedures to safeguard pupils are robust, including vetting of staff and others who have contact with them. The very effective tracking of pupils' progress over time means underachievement is securely identified. There are excellent mechanisms for supporting at-risk or vulnerable pupils so that the majority make outstanding progress. Work with outside agencies such as speech therapists is highly effective in this respect. Effective steps are taken to inform parents and carers about their children's progress and to involve them in their education, such as by sharing targets in reading diaries.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers work well as a team because the headteacher fosters a supportive atmosphere where expertise is shared. The deputy headteacher leads well on areas such as inclusion, where the school is particularly successful, and is playing an increasingly strategic

role in the school. Other leaders, such as subject coordinators, provide good leadership, although their impact varies because staff changes in recent years have led to a lack of continuity in some areas of responsibility. However, their capacity is developing well as a result of professional development and support from the headteacher.

Effective monitoring and evaluation yields a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The outcomes are used well to inform staff development and strategic planning. However, some aspects of school and subject development plans lack the precision required to boost achievement further. For example, they do not always identify specific aspects of pupils' learning which are weaker and what will be done about them, or show how the impact of the actions taken will be measured.

The governors are very supportive and hold the school to account well. They are not afraid to challenge staff about progress, although they recognise the need for sharper targets in some areas of development planning so they can make unequivocal judgements about the school's progress against them.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Blatchington Infant School, Hove, East Sussex BN3 8BN

This letter is to tell you what we found out during our recent inspection. We really enjoyed coming in to the school to meet you and would like to thank you for talking to us and showing us what you do.

- Yours is a good school that has some outstanding features. It helps you make good progress in your learning and makes you all feel welcome.
- You all get on very well with each other, are keen to make the most of your time at school and behave very well.
- You told us you really enjoy going to school and feel very safe and well looked after by the adults. Your parents agree.
- You understand how important it is to stay healthy and fit by eating well and getting plenty of exercise.
- You enjoy helping each other and are keen to do things like being a playground buddy.
- The school is really good at helping you when you find learning difficult and you are really good at learning together.
- Your lessons are exciting and you get given lots of interesting things to do.
- Most of you know what your teachers want you to do to make your work better but it would help if you could think about it for yourselves as well so that you are able to improve your work on your own.
- The teachers work hard to make the school even better but they need to be a bit clearer about how some of the things they want to do will help you and how they will know if any difference has been made.

Thank you again for your help and good luck.

Stephen Long Her Majesty's Inspector