



Mile Oak Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114430
Local Authority Brighton and Hove
Inspection number 289906
Inspection date 14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Graham Avenue
School category	Community		Portslade
Age range of pupils	4-11		Brighton BN41 2WN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01273 294880
Number on roll (school)	472	Fax number	01273 294882
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Harry Steer
		Headteacher	Susan Mines
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is larger than most primary schools. A higher-than-normal number of pupils enter or leave the school after the normal time of entry in the Reception year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. Most children are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. The effective provision of education, integrated care and extended services meets the needs of pupils very well. Adults and pupils alike live the school motto of 'Only my best will do'. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is rightly proud of its good care, support and guidance. The school provides a very wide range of activities that effectively enables pupils to develop into confident and independent young people, who feel fully involved in school life and able to contribute to the wider community. Pupils are very positive about their school, including those who joined later than their peers, and appreciate what it offers. They feel safe and say that bullying is rare. Pupils take on many responsibilities enthusiastically, such as running the school libraries, as 'reading champions' to promote reading with others or developing the school grounds. This environmental work has been recognised by an 'Eco-School' silver award.

Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is good across the school and pupils have such positive attitudes. The emphasis placed on helping pupils to develop a love of learning is successful, from the time they start school in the Reception classes. Teachers build very well on this firm foundation by planning lessons which pupils find interesting. Classrooms are bright and full of stimulating images, helping pupils' enjoyment of their work. They say that learning is fun. The good curriculum meets pupils' needs well and successfully meets the school's aim to provide creative opportunities where sport, music and the arts are valued alongside the development of basic skills. Pupils' attainment is monitored regularly to identify any possible underachievement, and appropriate action is taken when some additional help is needed. The school has identified that it can help pupils to play an even greater role in monitoring their own learning by improving further the quality of targets for improvement agreed with them.

The key to the school's success lies in its good leadership and management at all levels. Teamwork is very strong across the staff team and between pupils and adults. Good relationships and a lack of complacency underpin everything that happens in the school. The headteacher has an exceptionally clear view of the school's strengths and of the areas that need more development to raise standards further. The current focus on broadening the teaching of writing is the result of a very detailed analysis of the quality of pupils' writing in recent years and research into how this could be developed further. This rigorous approach to management has meant that the school has developed well since the last inspection. It now has the capacity for ongoing improvement. Parents are confident in the school. Many parental comments are reflected in one parent's view that 'I think Mile Oak is a wonderful school. It has so much to offer. My child is extremely happy and cannot wait to go to school each morning'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the plan to broaden the teaching of writing.
- Improve the quality of the improvement targets agreed with individual pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes is variable, but overall well below that normally found in children of their age. Children develop well, particularly in their emotional development, which gives them a very positive attitude to school. Some reach the levels expected for their age but a significant number have lower levels in their language and communication skills. Pupils continue to achieve well through the rest of the school. By the time they take the national tests in Year 6, results are in line with national averages. Progress from Year 2 to Year 6 was higher than nationally in 2005 and is expected to be as high again when the 2006 data is available. Results in science improved well in 2006 as a result of a particular focus on improving pupils' skills to apply their understanding in new contexts. Writing has not been as strong as other areas, particularly in the Year 2 tests, and this is being addressed as the current focus for improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They are proud of the improvements made to the school environment, such as the pavilion and outdoor theatre, and show this in the respect they have for these facilities. Behaviour in and out of lessons is exemplary. Pupils have really positive attitudes to learning. They demonstrate their keenness to be in school by very low levels of unauthorised absence. The school has worked well in partnership with parents to bring attendance levels into line with national averages. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They particularly enjoy showing initiative and taking on responsibility. Many have made an important contribution by planning the school's grounds and then helping to dig the pond and grow flowers and vegetables. They understand and are enthused by the school's focus on environmental issues. Pupils contribute beyond the school in a number of ways, for example, by putting on performances in the adjacent old people's home or contributing to a local newsletter. In so doing, they help secure the school's place at the heart of its community. They have a secure understanding of the need for exercise and healthy eating. The school recognises that this aspect requires further development if it is to achieve the 'Healthy Schools' gold award soon. Many enjoy fresh fruit provided each day. Additionally it gives those who run the fruit stall a useful opportunity to develop their economic awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils appreciate the efforts teachers make to ensure that learning is fun. Teaching is good and engages pupils very well, so that they work hard within a calm environment.

Pupils respond positively to high expectations and sustain concentration well because they are absorbed in what they are doing. The rapport between teachers and pupils is good so that learning becomes a shared activity, albeit guided by the teacher. The key strength of teaching is that work is planned against well-defined learning outcomes. Work is marked frequently, with a particular focus on picking up any misconceptions and focusing on important corrections. Much identifies clearly for pupils what they have to do to improve further. The school has begun to implement its plan developed with the local authority to improve the teaching of writing further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum impacts positively on pupils' good achievements. The statutory curriculum is enriched very well by visitors to the school and visits to places of interest, including opportunities for residential visits. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that supports their personal development well. The curriculum is planned effectively to build on prior attainment and teachers amend national guidance well to make learning relevant. Pupils particularly enjoy the links made between subjects. For example, the link between art and poetry with Year 6 pupils writing 'Oojmaflip' poems and drawing pictures was a particular success. These links could be even stronger to bring greater relevance to pupils' learning and this is planned as a future development by the school. Plans are well advanced to introduce French in the Spring term in Years 5 and 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils trust adults and know that they have their safety and well-being at heart. They say that there is always someone there to help, either another pupil to play with if someone is lonely or an adult to sort out a problem. All required procedures for pupils' protection are in place. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress well through regular discussions with teachers. Senior managers review every child's progress at least twice a year to pick up any possible underachievement and take appropriate action when this is identified. Some short-term improvement targets set for older pupils provide them with very clear guidance. The school recognises that this good practice needs to be extended further into other year groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are very strong and reflected in the quality of joint planning and supportive teamwork. All share a commitment to ensuring the best possible provision for pupils. The governing body is supportive, but also holds the school to account well. It has taken the decisions needed to ensure future financial viability. The school is rigorous in its self-evaluation. It has identified appropriate areas for attention, designed to bring about the greatest improvements. Managers recognise

that the teaching of aspects of the curriculum such as writing, particularly in Years 1 and 2, requires further development if it is to impact more positively on pupils' standards. Most leaders are new in their posts and have had limited time to bring about identified improvements. There is a strong consensus across the team, indicating a good capacity for ongoing improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
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	2

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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	2
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.

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	1
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	2
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

Thank you for the welcome you all gave me when I visited the school recently. I very much enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with some of you and seeing you all at work. I now want to let you know what I thought.

- The school council told me that they think the school is good and I agree.
- You work hard in lessons and I was pleased to see how much you enjoy your learning. I was particularly impressed by how well you were concentrating in lessons and really making an effort. Clearly everyone believes that 'Only my best will do' and tries to live by this motto.
- Your teachers make your lessons fun and they mark your work carefully so that you learn even more by doing corrections.
- Your behaviour is excellent and this makes school life pleasant and enjoyable.
- I was pleased when the school council said everyone in the school is really friendly and that there is always someone to play with at lunchtime.
- You told me that you feel safe in school. You also said that when problems do sometimes happen, then an adult will sort it out quickly when you tell them about it.
- You are lucky to have so many interesting things to do outside. The new pavilion and stage must be fun when the weather is good and the new bike shed should encourage more of you to cycle to school, which will help you to stay fit and healthy.

The school council found it difficult to suggest things which need to be improved and it is good that you understand how well you are taught and looked after. Miss Mines and the staff have planned some things for the future which should help you to make your work even better.

These include:

- Finding more ways to help you improve your writing so you will gradually be introduced to new writing activities.
- Making the targets they agree with you more precise so that you know exactly what you have to do next to improve your work and achieve the next level.