



Woodingdean Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114480
Local Authority Brighton and Hove
Inspection number 289930
Inspection date 29 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Warren Road
School category	Community		Woodingdean
Age range of pupils	4-11		Brighton BN2 6BB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01273 680811
Number on roll (school)	401	Fax number	01273 607359
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Chris Manville
		Headteacher	Gina Hutchins
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Woodingdean Primary is a larger than average school predominantly serving its local area on the outskirts of Brighton. It has a larger proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than is found in many other schools. This is partly because the school has close partnerships with three special schools. The headteacher was appointed last year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Woodingdean is an outstanding school, which gives pupils the best possible chances to succeed both academically and personally and where achievement is already good and set to improve even more. The leaders of the school have put in place all the necessary elements for all pupils to make rapid progress. As a result, standards have improved in almost every area, except in writing in Years 1 and 2, where more able pupils have not made quite the same rapid progress as elsewhere. Even here, though, the leaders have recognised that more needs to be done and have put in place well-thought-out strategies to remedy the situation which are already beginning to bear fruit.

Children join the school with standards slightly below average. The outstanding teaching and in particular the close attention to pupils' individual needs ensures that pupils achieve well, and in many cases outstandingly well, and their progress accelerates as they move through the school. By Year 6 they achieve standards which are above average.

Parents rightly recognise how the excellent care, guidance and support mean that their children's personal development is outstanding. There are excellent, rigorous systems in place to eliminate risk, manage poor behaviour and promote pupils' well-being, which means that they feel very secure and act very responsibly. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about how much they enjoy the many exciting activities within the excellent curriculum and about how they are making much better progress.

Leadership and management are first class. The new headteacher, having a good understanding of the school, has already made significant improvements. She has made excellent use of the individual strengths within the senior management team, enabling them to take strategic decisions. She, along with the highly effective governing body, is working on further improvements to the environment and to the way that pupils can take a more active role in their own education. The very effective monitoring of teaching by subject leaders means that the school is able to identify any relatively weaker elements and to deal with them quickly.

All the right elements of strong but sustainable provision are now in place. From the improvement the school has shown since the last inspection and in the increase in pupil achievement, it can demonstrate an excellent capacity to become highly successful.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, reach their full potential in their writing skills by, for example, extending the use of literacy across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average overall and pupils achieve well. Particularly impressive are the improvements in national tests for English and mathematics between Year 2 and 6. These have been at least in the top 10% of the country for the last three years and sometimes in the top 2%. Those presently in Year 6 are showing the same level of capability and the challenging targets suggest the trend will continue.

A significant number of children start school with speech and language difficulties. They settle quickly, mix well and make good progress. By Year 1 most have achieved the levels expected of them, although fewer have appropriate early writing skills.

Through Years 1 and 2 this good progress continues, although the number of pupils who achieve the higher Level 3 in writing is still too low. By Year 6 pupils are achieving well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as in art, physical education and, with the recently improved resources, in information and communication technology. In addition, they are well prepared for their future education by developing technical expertise. For instance, there is some very impressive work on display showing computer manipulated images and creative pastel work linked to a study of the artist Andy Warhol.

Pupils with learning difficulties and particularly those with disabilities make excellent progress. The outstanding support they receive for their complex needs has been thought out well, and a number of pupils subsequently achieve levels above those expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is excellent. The school has forged many links to enhance pupils' understanding of the world. For instance, they have twinned with a school in Nigeria, where e-mails, gifts and letters are exchanged. This has enabled pupils to see how other cultures, although different, can develop just as well as their own. Older pupils maturely explained how the introduction of play leaders and sports captains is helping to make playtimes and activities more interesting. They rightly said that behaviour was good even though there were some children who were quite capable of being challenging. Pupils feel safe and take a very active role in decisions both for the school and for the wider community. For instance, they are presently involved in the design and financing of a library refurbishment. They, along with the very active parents, teachers and friends association, have helped raise more than £10,000.

Pupils are very clearly enjoying school and are excellent ambassadors. Two boys, for example, were keen to make sure that they showed off their merit charts and how much they had done in mathematics. A further impact of their improved personal development can be seen in the improved attendance figures, which for the first time for a number of years are above the national average. Pupils are very well prepared

for the next stage of learning, by the fast progress they make in literacy and numeracy, as well as in learning to work both independently or in close collaboration with others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent because teachers have a deep understanding of how to motivate pupils and how to get the very best from their class. The school's accurate monitoring shows how teachers have used assessment information to direct very challenging work to different levels of ability. Its effect can be seen in the number of pupils in many classes who make far more progress than is expected in one year. There are many examples of highly innovative activities such as a lesson about writing a newspaper report. The teacher had prepared photographic slides on the interactive whiteboard using an apparent fight between a teacher and a fluffy dinosaur. The engaging and amusing articles that pupils produced were laced with description while at the same time being checked by the teacher to make sure they had the correct structure and syntax. All this ensured pupils made excellent progress over a number of lessons.

Over the past few years there has been a concentrated effort to continually improve the quality of teaching. Teachers share ideas to eliminate any relative weaknesses, such as in how to improve writing technique. While the school recognises that there are still some pupils who could improve, the impact of these measures is now evident through the continual rise in pupils' overall achievement over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum has been built up over some years and is a key reason for the improving academic and personal achievement of pupils. Apart from ensuring that all statutory requirements are met, the school has added many innovative features. Pupils have access to Spanish and French, a very large number of clubs and are supported by the local secondary school sports department. A number of national awards such as the Activemark and Healthy Schools award have been gained and the recent 'Walk to School' campaign has resulted in extra funding for safety measures. As one pupil said, 'I don't know how we fit it all in.'

The school takes every opportunity to widen its horizons by developing links with other providers. A particularly good example is the link with the local special school. Joint activities take place and expert advice is used to enhance the provision of the pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties. This has enabled these pupils to make rapid improvements in both social and academic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's philosophy is one of successfully ensuring that pupils can take responsibility for their own lives. It is no surprise that the care and welfare of pupils is outstanding. They are fully encouraged to lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives through initiatives such as the 'Healthy Food and Active Fun' club. The sports captains effectively lead on various activities and the play leaders, with their impressive red fleeces, have been trained in leading playground games. Pupils remarked how much more productive and interesting the playtimes were.

Pupils have been increasingly made aware of their own personal and academic targets but are also expected to make the right decisions for themselves. For instance, in some lessons they are given the opportunity for extended work by being asked to 'take the challenge'. Individual targets could be more specific about the next small steps they need to take in English. Nevertheless, at a whole-school level, the thorough assessments made across many subjects enable pupil progress to be consistently checked and improved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The new but highly experienced headteacher has been able to bring a fresh approach to the work of the school. The self-evaluation is very realistic. It continually looks to the future and recognises that all the right provision has been put in place but that this needs time to be fully embedded before pupil achievement is universally high throughout all years. The headteacher has widened the decision-making process by expanding the senior management team and by giving co-ordinators higher levels of responsibility for their areas. As they have gained confidence they have become more familiar with their roles. As a result, the correct priorities have been addressed to eliminate fluctuations in pupils' achievement and to continue to raise standards. An example of this is the steep rise in pupils' achievement over the last three years. The highly expert governing body has been able to both support and challenge the decision-making process through their regular monitoring and analysis of the school's provision. They have used astute financial management to maintain a balanced budget and a small contingency. Further funding has been sought and gained, such as a free refurbishment of the dining area.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	1
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?	1
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 looking after me so well during my recent visit. It was great to talk to so many of you and to hear about what you enjoy most about your school. As I promised some of you, I have enclosed the main points of my report below.

- You told me how proud you were of your school. I can see why. You get an outstanding education and what is more you told me that learning was fun. You do lots of activities in lessons and your clubs, and visits certainly keep you all busy.
- I enjoyed hearing all about the sports captains and play leaders. Things like this are all helping you to become independent.
- You said that behaviour was good in the school and I agree. I think you try very hard to do your best. You have very good attitudes towards your learning and obviously want to do as well as you can.
- You reach good standards by the time you leave in Year 6, particularly in your SATs but also in art and physical education. I think there are some of you who could do even better with your writing and this is something that your teachers will be working at to help you improve.
- You are taught very well indeed. All your teachers plan their lessons carefully to make sure that you have to work hard but also that you are kept interested in what you are doing.
- Your headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. Some of you told me this and so did many of your parents. She is really well supported by many other teachers and governors.
- You all told me you feel safe and secure. That is because you are cared for excellently.

There are many ways in which you can help the school become even better. You can make sure that everyone behaves as well as possible. You can continue to work hard, and help your friends whenever they need it. Finally, can I wish you all the best for the future and hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Woodingdean.