



Robsack Wood Community Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114483
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 289931
Inspection dates 6–7 December 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	Whatlington Way
School category	Community		St Leonards-on-Sea
Age range of pupils	3–11		TN38 9TE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01424 853521
Number on roll (school)	283	Fax number	01424 853038
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	E Simpson
		Headteacher	J Benwell
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Robsack Wood Community Primary School and Nursery is an average sized primary school. The local area although having mixed housing has some highly significant levels of deprivation. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low. The school is developing many extended services including healthcare and a children's centre. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average. There is a very high mobility of pupils.

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 an effective school with a number of outstanding features. In the last two years, it has been through some difficulties because of the very high mobility of teachers. Despite this, the good achievement of pupils has been maintained because of good teaching and the excellent leadership and management. Having nearly resolved these problems, the school is well placed to become highly successful.

Children enter the Nursery with very low levels of social, communication and mathematical skills. By the time they leave Year 6 these pupils have done well to achieve standards in line with their age. In 2006, a quarter of pupils gained results in national tests above this. Achievement and provision through the Foundation Stage and through the rest of the school are good although slightly better progress is made from the Nursery year to Year 2 because teaching here is more consistent. Previous difficulties have meant that achievement, while good between Years 3 and 6, has not yet returned to the high levels it was in 2003 and 2004.

Personal development as well as the care, guidance and support of pupils is outstanding because the school provides a learning environment that nurtures but also challenges pupils, many of whom come from very difficult backgrounds. There is a corporate commitment by the whole school community, including pupils, which strives for excellence both in provision and in outcomes. As a result, the balance between academic and personal success is very good and, through the good curriculum, pupils are well prepared for their future education. The high quality of assessments, both for subjects and personal development, ensures that pupils are very aware of what they need to do to improve and how this might be achieved. For instance, one pupil talked candidly about how he was not well behaved when he arrived at the school. Through the work on success criteria and understanding emotions he now felt 'more settled' and so was 'doing much better with his work'.

The highly respected and inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher has been able to develop the expertise of everyone. For instance, on seeing the difficulties of recruitment he has built the capacity from within the school. This has been done by recognising potential and taking teaching assistants or helpers through the graduate training programme to become classteachers. There is tangible success from these initiatives as much of the good and exceptional teaching can be seen in these classes. Where variability in teaching has occurred, such as in the junior years, this is being very effectively developed through extra support and by using other excellent role models from within the staff. The innovative senior team has been widened to include a governor and non-teaching member of staff and so improvement plans are thorough and very well founded, providing evidence of an outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the variability in teaching in Years 3 to 6 is eliminated so that pupils make more continuous and even better rates of progress, particularly those with higher ability.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach standards broadly in line with those expected. On entry to the school many children have low standards in speaking and listening and find difficulties in counting. Even with the good progress they make through the Nursery and Reception classes, standards by the start of Year 1 are significantly below those expected for their age. This good progress continues through Years 1 and 2 and pupils are able to improve their basic reading, writing and mathematical skills. By the end of Year 2, standards have improved but are still below those expected. However, because of the consistently good and often outstanding teaching they have been given, the foundations have been provided to help them move forward rapidly. Pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are close to average, confirmed by the national tests in 2006. Progress through Years 3 to 6, while good, is not quite as consistent. The big difference is that the number of pupils achieving the higher levels is not as high as it could be because the teaching has more variability through different years. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make particularly good progress because of the extremely high levels of support they receive. Approximately half of this group goes on to achieve the standards expected for their age but from much lower starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is demonstrated by their great enjoyment of school and enthusiastic approach to learning. Pupils' behaviour is very good because they are keen to please but also show respect for each other. This contributes strongly to developing pupils' self-esteem and to their positive attitudes to learning. Expectations are made clear and pupils have a great sense of belonging to a school community. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from frequent physical education lessons, sports clubs and good school meals, often with adults joining them. Consequently, they have a good understanding of social, safe and healthy lifestyles. The school council provides an effective voice in helping to improve the school, such as planning new playground equipment and purchasing new netball kits. The very good provision of play equipment and activities makes a positive contribution to the calm and well organised playtimes. Pupils respect the views, values and beliefs of others. Strong community links, including fund raising for charities, notable business links, and an annual trip to France, as well as a strong focus on basic skills prepare pupils very well for their economic future and well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good through the school because of the way that the correct structures are in place to ensure that strengths are utilised to eliminate any relative weaker aspects of provision. As a result, pupils make substantial progress from the Nursery year to when they leave in Year 6. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Staff understand the need to make sure the children have the necessary social skills as well as the basic skills of speaking, early reading, writing and numeracy. Through Years 1 to 6 these skills are built upon through relevant tasks and pertinent questioning. As a result, pupils make good academic and personal progress. Behaviour management is very strong. The very well trained support staff are vigilant during lessons and are able to divert any potential incidents before they can disrupt the learning of others. This all helps those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to make substantial levels of progress. Where teaching is not quite as strong, as in the junior years, the teachers do not have the same level of understanding about how to provide the best levels of challenge. For instance, in one class the teacher was not content with a short answer to a difficult question but probed further to ensure the pupil was made to think. However, in another the teacher's questions only required a yes or no answer and so learning was not so high.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school and is greatly enhanced by many clubs. It is well planned to meet the needs of all learners. Strong emphasis is rightly placed on providing a vibrant learning environment which motivates pupils and encourages them to do their best. Key skills such as communication are being progressively developed. This relatively new approach is starting to prove successful, particularly in giving pupils opportunities to write for a purpose and use computer technology in other subjects. However, the school realises that this still needs embedding before its full effect can be monitored.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are excellent because the very caring ethos means that pupils thrive as individuals. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and parents are confident that their children are well cared for and that the school will deal effectively with any worries or concerns. As one parent wrote, 'Robsack have recognised my son's needs and addressed them accurately and professionally...' Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are particularly strong. As a result, pupils say that they feel very secure at school. Additional programmes and very good links with outside agencies ensure that pupils are assessed and their progress

reviewed very regularly, both in the short and the longer term. This enables staff to quickly identify any pupils who may be falling behind and put in place very skilful and thorough support as well as keeping the pupils and parents fully involved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is very well supported by an efficient and effective deputy. They know the school very well and have a clear vision of how to build on the strengths and make improvements. The shared commitment is a vital part of the school's exceptionally strong ethos. They rigorously assess all pupils' progress, and work with the class teachers to set challenging targets. With the rest of the staff they are strongly focused upon raising standards and promoting the school's high quality provision. The school has effective and realistic procedures for evaluating how well it is doing and setting clear priorities for improvement. In doing this, it regularly seeks and welcomes the views of parents and pupils. The school is very well resourced. The headteacher, with his highly valued business manager, have procured funds from local industry and available grants to provide an excellent environment. The very knowledgeable governors are fully involved in the consideration and implementation of key actions. They are very passionate about providing the best possible wrap-around care for the school's families, through the children's centre and extended facilities.

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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?	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	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	2
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	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?	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?	1
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	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 us so well and helping us to find out so much about your school. As I promised some of you, I have written this letter to give you the main messages that I told your teachers.

- You told us how much you enjoy school and how proud you are of the things that you achieve. We can see why. Your school looks and feels very exciting, especially all that wonderful work displayed in the entrance hall.
- You also told us that you think you are making good progress both personally and with your work. We agree. We can see from the tests that you do, that many of you are reaching standards that we would expect for your age. Perhaps more of you could do even better by the time you leave in Year 6.
- You make this good progress because you are taught well. Your teachers know exactly what to do to make sure you do your best. Perhaps some more of you in the juniors could try even harder.
- You told us that you like the new subject activities you are doing and how they seem to connect together and are more relevant. Your teachers will be having a look at these through the year to see if they can be any better. You might be able to offer some suggestions about this.
- We think you are cared for and supported outstandingly well. It is great to see that you have such excellent relationships with all the staff. We can see that many of you treat them as friends and turn to them when you have any problems. Of course you are playing your part such as by learning how to be mentors and friends in the playground.
- We have said that your school is outstandingly led and managed by your headteacher and all the other members of staff. This is one of the main reasons why you are doing well. Finally, we wish you all the best for the future and hope that you will help make Robsack Wood Community Primary School and Nursery an even better place by working hard and behaving well.