

East Hoathly CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114501
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	289940
Inspection date	27 June 2007
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 category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lindsay Wiggins
Headteacher	Anthea Hill
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
School address	Church Marks Lane East Hoathly Lewes BN8 6EQ
Telephone number	01825 840247
Fax number	01825841055

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Inspection number	289940

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

East Hoathly is a small rural school where numbers decreased significantly two years ago. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low. The headteacher took up her post in January 2006. At the time of the last inspection, there were a number of serious weaknesses. Since then the school has been monitored twice.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. This is because the school now provides an adequate and improving quality of education. Leadership and management overall, while satisfactory, have stabilised. The new headteacher provides clear direction and through her extensive monitoring, evaluation and support is ensuring that previous weaknesses are being resolved effectively.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. As a result, pupils achieve satisfactorily and are reaching above-average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Through this new sense of purpose, combined with a concerted effort to eliminate weaknesses, the school has shown it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Since the last inspection, pupils' personal development has remained good because of the good care, guidance and support they have received. Pupils are proud of their school and have appreciated the improvements that have been made to the good curriculum. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'I shall be sad to leave this school.'

While parents are highly supportive of the school's aims, a significant proportion of them are unsure how well recent improvements have impacted on the provision for their children. For example, following her appointment, the headteacher used extensive expert support, particularly from the local authority, to improve teaching. In addition, she used the expertise of the staff in areas where it will make the most difference. These changes of staffing arrangements have caused concerns amongst some parents. Nevertheless, while there is still more to be done, these developments have helped to improve the consistency of pupils' progress as they move through the school.

Children start with standards broadly similar to those expected for their age. Provision in the Foundation Stage, although it has improved, remains inadequate. This is because there are too few opportunities for children to develop their skills through relevant and independent activities. Consequently, standards by the end of the Reception year, while broadly as expected in language and mathematical development, are not as high as they could be. This is particularly the case in their social, emotional and creative development and to a lesser extent in their early writing skills. This legacy of underachievement has caused difficulties through Years 1 and 2. However, improved teaching means that pupils, while they could be doing better, particularly in writing, now make satisfactory progress and reach average standards at the end of Year 2. The much stronger teaching through Years 3 to 6 is eliminating many of the earlier problems. Hence, pupils here make good progress. Nearly all reach the age-expected levels by Year 6, with approximately half achieving above this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage so that the activities meet the needs of all children and prepare them better for their future education.
- Improve the standards in writing by the end of Year 2 by developing basic skills more stringently and systematically.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

While standards are above average by the end of Year 6, progress through the school is variable, improving rapidly through Years 3 to 6. Foundation Stage children do not achieve well enough. Progress in reading and mathematical skills is satisfactory. In contrast, there is a lack of regular opportunity for independent learning or appropriate activities linked to individual need. Consequently, children's knowledge and understanding of the world, as well as their social, emotional and creative development, are below the levels expected. Writing skills, while showing some improvement, are not developed well enough over the longer term. As a result, children are less certain about how to develop these skills in later years. For instance, in one lesson, the opportunity was lost to practice letter shapes or to encourage the group to set down their ideas. In Years 1 and 2, recent assessments show that pupils have broadly met their targets, although these were set relatively low in writing. Better progress has been made in mathematics because pupils had established early skills that have effectively been built upon. The good achievement of all pupils through Years 3 to 6 is evident in English, mathematics and science and is consistently reflected in national test results. As a result, by the time they leave, pupils are suitably prepared for their future education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the above-average attendance. They behave well and become increasingly mature, and the older pupils hold interesting and lively conversations with adults. The class and school councils have been instrumental in making changes such as helping to ensure that pupils adopt good safe practices. Although the youngest children are less independent because of limited opportunities, further up the school pupils are increasingly responsible for their own actions. Through better curricular opportunities they have become involved in their local community and further afield. For instance, older pupils, with the assistance of outside specialists, are making their carnival procession masks to be used later this month. Pupils' understanding of the necessity for a healthy lifestyle is evident through their physical activities and discussions about which foods contribute to a healthy diet. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of pupils is good. Through their good links with the local church they are taught Christian values and have established links with a twinned school in France. This is helping them gain a satisfactory understanding about different beliefs, cultures and lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The variabilities in teaching are less evident than they were in the past. Common strengths include the thorough planning and good expectations about what pupils can achieve. Teachers are generally able to use appropriate methods to engage and manage pupils. Relationships are positive and help to encourage learning.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage has been inadequate over the longer term. This is the reason why children have not made as strong a start as they should have. It has also meant that pupils have had to make up ground in Years 1 to 3. Some exemplary teaching is being used well to

help develop the expertise of other teachers. This has started, for instance, in supporting teachers with developing writing across various subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. The small numbers of pupils who have English as an additional language are quickly provided with support to enable them to communicate effectively, and they often make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection the curriculum has been enlivened with a range of new opportunities such as trips, visitors and themed weeks in a successful attempt to make it more relevant. The renovated playground, for instance, followed extensive discussions, mapping, research and review to ensure that all pupils had better opportunities for playing and recreation. Not only has this improved play activities but also the behaviour and relationships between the pupils. There are a number of extra-curricular activities and some innovative competitions have been entered such as the electric car competition; pupils talked engagingly about driving around the track and coming second!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Suitable systems are in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe and well. Built into the curriculum are times to think about others and to help them understand about tolerance. Pupils with learning difficulties are given good support. They have regular opportunities to work with specialists and their progress is tracked suitably. Teachers have built up an increasingly rigorous range of assessments that have given them a good view of each pupil's academic progress. This has helped to ensure that both pupils and teachers become responsible for how well they do and so can be held to account for any dip in performance. This is also helping smooth out any variability in achievement and to provide better opportunities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a very realistic view of the school's position and knows that it will take time to eliminate all the weaker elements of the past and rebuild the confidence and full support of parents. She has worked effectively, as a first priority, on ensuring that all pupils make continuously high levels of progress both academically and personally. Rigorous and intensive monitoring and support are beginning to bring about improved teaching, a better quality curriculum and better use of assessment information. While the process is not yet complete and has taken longer than the headteacher anticipated, standards are improving and the levels of achievement are being raised. She has had good support from outside agencies and, in the absence of a senior leadership team, has used the expertise of her staff. Subject co-ordinators' action plans show that they know how to drive forward improvements but, as yet, these subject plans are not always sufficiently precise to ensure that the process happens quickly enough. The governing body, having seen many changes in the recent past, is also starting to play its part in school improvement. While governance is satisfactory, with the intensive training now taking place, governors have the potential to be more confident in both supporting and questioning decisions.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of East Hoathly C of E Primary School, East Hoathly, East Sussex BN8 6EQ

Thank you for making us feel so welcome during our recent visit. We really enjoyed finding out about your school and talking to so many of you. As I promised some of you in Year 6, I have written the main points of the report below.

- Many of you told us you enjoyed school and were pleased with what was happening. We can see how much it has improved. You will be pleased to know that we have said it no longer has serious weaknesses, as the education you are getting is now satisfactory.
- As some of you said, your new headteacher, along with her staff, is making the right decisions about what to improve. They have already made sure that your lessons provide you with more challenging work and this will continue.
- We think your teachers are working hard to make things better and that you are cared for well. This has helped make each subject more exciting and to give you more opportunities to visit interesting places, talk to visitors and to try out new things.
- When you leave the school many of you have made good progress and have reached standards at or above those of others of your age. We have said that progress could be better for the younger children so that you all have the right foundations upon which to build your later learning.
- We think that those of you who have difficulty with your writing need some more help with this. We have suggested that there should be more chances in lots of lessons to use your writing skills.

Finally, we would like to wish you all the best for your future. We hope you will play your part in continuing to make the school better by working hard and suggesting ways that things can be improved.

Yours faithfully

David Collard Lead Inspector