

Northiam Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114516
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	289948
Inspection date	14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Brenda Spencer

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	77
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	R White
Headteacher	L Worsley
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2001
School address	Main Street Northiam TN31 6NB
Telephone number	01797 252141
Fax number	01797 253020

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Northiam is a small village primary school where the number of pupils has dropped by nearly a quarter in the last year. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is lower than the national average. The headteacher is leaving at the end of the Spring term. There are extensive building works in progress to extend the facilities available for the school and local community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Northiam Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory education. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress because the quality of teaching, curriculum and academic guidance they receive is satisfactory. Children enter school with broadly average starting points. There are relatively few lower and higher attainers. By the end of Reception Year, most achieve the expected goals in their learning because the provision is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they go through the school and typically reach average standards in English and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6. The standards in the current Year 1 are above average in literacy and reflect these pupils' higher starting points.

Results were disappointing in 2005. Careful analysis of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning informed priorities for school improvement. Writing and aspects of mathematics were given due emphasis in the curriculum, bringing about improved results in 2006. The school sets itself challenging targets to reach and is focusing on raising the number of pupils who reach above-average standards. Pupils' progress is regularly reviewed in English and mathematics. This and the work in pupils' books show the impact of recent initiatives is successful and some pupils are now making good progress. Marking of pupils' work gives advice on how to improve next time. Not all of this advice is specific enough to bring about change.

Some parents have concerns about behaviour. They are not assured that the efforts the school is making are working to help a small minority to behave as well as the vast majority. Whilst the school is carefully checking whether academic achievement is improving, this is not the case for pupils' personal development. Behaviour of a kind which causes concern is carefully documented. However, there is no overview to highlight whether the strategies employed are effective. Consequently, it is difficult to reassure parents with conviction based on evidence.

There have been many changes in the staff and governing body, which some find disconcerting. The present team has a clear view of how the school needs to go forward and have sufficient skill to achieve this. The support of the local authority has been helpful in bringing about improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all marking identifies precisely how pupils can improve their work.
- Monitor the impact of the school's work on pupils' personal development and well-being, including their behaviour.
- Ensure parents are fully informed about the work of the school, for example, in tackling poor behaviour.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most pupils' achievements, including those with learning difficulties, are satisfactory. Children enter school with broadly average standards. There are few higher and lower attainers, although this varies year by year. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception Year and those capable of doing so reach the expected goals in their learning. Generally, by the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach average standards. Standards of the current Year 2 are below average, reflecting the low starting points of a few children. However, those capable of attaining higher standards

are on track to reach them. Standards of literacy in Year 1 are above average, reflecting their capability.

Systems introduced in the last year are now being used well to track the progress pupils make. Standards in writing and mathematics were not high enough. The positive effects of the school's work to address this can be seen in improving standards and progress. Some pupils are making enormous leaps in their learning. Those who are not making sufficient gains are identified and receive good quality additional support. Recently improved planning to meet the needs of all ability groups is making satisfactory provision for higher attainers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' attitudes to school are mixed. Some have very positive attitudes. A small minority dislike having to work hard. Attendance is much improved since the previous inspection and is currently satisfactory. Whilst most pupils behave well in class and around the school, a significant minority find it hard to live up to the school's expectations, despite encouragement. Some parents are anxious about this. Pupils know how to live a healthy lifestyle but some are not too keen to eat healthily. They are very clear about how to keep safe, this being particularly important while the current building work provides potential hazards. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory but their knowledge of other cultures is relatively weak. The pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the local community and are supportive of charity work. Their preparation for the world of work is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Frequent checks are made on the quality of teaching and learning both by the school leaders and the local authority. Currently, the quality is satisfactory. Staff are implementing well the priorities for improvement and this is reflected in the quickening rates of progress, particularly since October. Pupils are involved well in lessons through interesting discussions. They are encouraged to consider their responses with partners, for example, what scribes and farmers contributed to ancient Egyptian society. They are developing subject-specific vocabulary well so they can communicate their ideas more clearly. Teaching assistants are well briefed and consequently pupils receive effective support. Interactive whiteboards are used well to aid pupils' understanding, for example, of area in mathematics and of the Tudors. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Not enough is done to ensure lessons begin with a snappy start or to promote good behaviour. Strategies such as praising good behaviour and quickly stepping in to deflect inattention are not sufficiently established. Consequently, in some lessons pupils make only satisfactory progress, although the curriculum may be interesting and the teaching effective in every other respect.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Support by the local authority has ensured children in Reception now enjoy appropriate experiences and make a smooth transition to Year 1. Activities are purposeful and provide a good balance of self-chosen and adult-directed options. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Interesting links are made between subjects, enabling pupils to apply skills across

subjects. Lessons are planned satisfactorily to meet the range of needs of pupils. The school works well with other agencies and schools, for example, to improve provision for writing and for those with learning difficulties. The current provision for clubs is limited and aspects of PE are curtailed because of the building programme. The school's personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) provides satisfactorily to promote pupils' ability to keep safe and understand issues around healthy living. It is not having sufficient impact on a few pupils' behaviour. There is an appropriate range of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum, including residential visits to support pupils' personal development. The programme for spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory. More needs to be done to improve pupils' understanding of other cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This area of the school's work to safeguard pupils' personal and academic well-being is much improved since the previous inspection. The school has appropriate procedures in place to ensure children are cared for by appropriate adults and that any potential hazards posed by their environment and activities are properly considered.

The systems to identify the rates of pupils' progress are enabling the school to give pupils relevant academic guidance in English and mathematics. This is supporting improving rates of progress. Appropriate help is given to pupils having difficulty learning. Targets for learning are evident in displays and are known to pupils. Their work is marked regularly. Some marking analyses very well what a pupil has done well and points precisely to where improvement should be made. Not all marking is sufficiently skilful in moving pupils' learning on.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led and managed satisfactorily. Important strides have been taken since the previous inspection to improve both the safety of pupils and the measures to track their academic progress.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate in most respects. The quality of teaching and learning has been monitored carefully for some considerable time. The school has an accurate view of where improvements should be sought. This has had positive outcomes, including better planning for different abilities. The school keeps a close eye on the academic progress pupils make and is able to assess whether what it is doing, for example, to improve writing, is working. This is not the case for pupils' personal development. Strategies are in place, including running specific clubs, aimed at improving pupils' behaviour. Incidents are conscientiously logged and records kept on pupils' files. Governors are kept well informed but as no overview is analysed on a regular basis, the school cannot identify clearly whether its efforts are being rewarded. This makes it difficult to persuade anxious parents of the effectiveness of the school's endeavours. Because the school considered its provision and not the outcomes of its work, it overestimated the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being.

Following a disappointing set of test results in 2005, the school was galvanised into action to remedy the situation. The local authority has been highly supportive in helping the school achieve improvements since then. There are appropriate arrangements being made to provide stable leadership and management and quality of teaching when the present headteacher leaves

at the end of term. This and the clear understanding by staff and governors of how the school needs to improve means the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve still further.

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Annex A

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you. A particular thank you must go to those of you who gave up your time to talk to Mr Palethorpe.

We think your school is giving you a satisfactory education. Staff and governors are doing the things they should to make things run smoothly. We agree with you that you are being cared for properly and there is someone to turn to if need be. The teaching and the things you do are satisfactory so that you make satisfactory progress. Some of you have been doing better than that, especially in writing and mathematics.

We noticed that the marking of your work points out how you can do it better next time. We want staff to be very clear when they give you this advice so you are able to do your best to improve your work. Some of your parents are worried about how well pupils behave. Most of you behave well. A few find it more difficult. We want the school to measure the improvements in behaviour so that they can reassure your parents if behaviour is not as bad as some of them think. I hope you will do your best so that the school can give them good news.

Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the questionnaires and letters at such short notice. These helped us to understand how well the school is doing.