

Moulsecoomb Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132028
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	293922
Inspection dates	16–17 May 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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	385
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Meadows
Headteacher	Charles Davies
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001
School address	The Highway Moulsecoomb Brighton BN2 4PA
Telephone number	01273 605700
Fax number	01273 690595

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Moulsecoomb is a larger-than-average primary school on the outskirts of Brighton city. It serves, almost exclusively, an area of very high deprivation. Children enter the school with very low attainment, many with highly significant problems with speech and language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is exceptionally high. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low.

The school has successfully applied and bid for local, national and European grants to help in regeneration. On site, many other services have their bases, including family learning centres, learning mentors and behaviour management specialists.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and increasingly effective school with many good and some outstanding features, however, the standards reached by pupils are still well below average. The personal development of pupils is good because they are exceptionally well cared for and guided and supported well. The good curriculum is very appropriate to the needs of individuals, particularly with regard to social and pastoral development. The good leadership and management have forged excellent links with partner institutions. The school has rigorously pursued a policy of putting in place the right environment that will raise the whole community's self-esteem and so provide pupils with better life chances. This has been done through extensive joint projects, involving parents, staff, pupils and the local community. Parents recognise how things have changed. As one said, 'This is a transformed school; not only are my children being well prepared but my involvement with the family learning centre is giving me my first chance of helping to be a part of this.'

Academically, pupils' progress is satisfactory, as is the quality of teaching, although both are good in Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, as the school recognises, teaching is not yet consistent and standards are too low in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. Satisfactory provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is starting to set the foundations for future learning. In Year 1 the children have under-developed skills, with some working at levels at least a year below those expected for their age. Through Years 1 and 2, pupils' progress is satisfactory but is built upon more significantly during the juniors. Consequently, pupils in Years 4 to 6 make good progress. Results from the 2006 Year 6 national tests show that while standards were low, pupils made very significant gains from when they were in Year 2. There is strong evidence from the good assessment data to indicate that this is likely to happen again this year. The school has correctly identified that consistency is the key to support its aim of building sustainable improvements over the long term.

The very strong direction provided by the headteacher, supported by a dedicated senior team, has a realistic vision about where developments will make the most impact. Over time, they have raised the quality of teaching and, most significantly, have substantially enhanced the learning opportunities. As a result, the behaviour of pupils has improved markedly and they have started to make better academic progress. This is reflected in the significant reduction in exclusions, the calm atmosphere around the school and the raising of teachers' expectations about what pupils are capable of achieving. The excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities means that they make good progress towards their own specific targets.

Pupils are proud to be associated with their school. It has taken some time to put the right provision in place but the impact of the many initiatives has now improved pupils' personal development. While there is still more to be done, this is also now starting to have a positive effect on academic performance.

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.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Years 2 and 6, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

- Raise the quality of all teaching to that of the best so that inconsistencies in pupils' progress are eliminated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily but leave Year 6 with well-below-average standards. This is because attainment on entry to the school is very low. Children in the Foundation Stage, while making satisfactory progress, still have low social, communication, mathematical and creative skills. Their knowledge of the world around them is also limited. There is satisfactory progress through Years 1 and 2 even though they still have well-below-average basic skills by the end of Year 2. This is reflected in national test results where approximately three-quarters are working at these low levels. Good progress in Years 4 to 6 comes about because of the consistency in teaching. By the end of Year 6 almost two-thirds are reaching standards similar to those expected, but very few achieve above this. The high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, many with behavioural or social problems, make good progress because of the excellent support they receive. Nevertheless, very few of them manage to achieve the nationally expected levels in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Pupils are friendly and make visitors feel welcome. In general, behaviour and attitudes to work are good and pupils want to learn. They respond very well when they are given practical activities. Pupils say that when bullying happens, and this is much rarer than it used to be, adults deal with the situation quickly. This is because everybody is clear about the parameters that have been set.

Pupils understand well about healthy lifestyles. Some explained why they had brought in their yoghurt by highlighting the ingredients. Pupils have a good understanding about safety as the school balances the need for safe play and adventurous activity. For example, a climbing wall enables pupils to experience some danger with supervision. These types of developments have reduced playground incidents and poor behaviour. It has also helped pupils run off their energy ready for work. Attendance has radically improved and is now just below the national average. Strong partnerships have been built with families. Included in this is the well-attended breakfast club, which has helped to improve punctuality. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of the pupils is good. Pupils are increasingly aware of their role in society and how they can play their part. The school council, for instance, has worked on raising the profile of the school and the playground buddy system has helped them take more responsibility. Pupils are being prepared suitably for their future life but the school knows that to secure their future economic well-being, the low standards in literacy and numeracy need to rise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The satisfactory quality of teaching across the school is due to the staff having an understanding about what educational experiences these pupils need. Much of the work is based on practical, first-hand experience and so pupils feel excited about learning. For instance, the Iron Age Roundhouse built last year gave pupils the opportunity to experience research, design and

building. They even had the chance to tread the straw and clay before 'slapping' it on the walls. It is now regularly used in lessons to provide an atmosphere when telling or writing stories.

The school's recent emphasis on understanding different learning styles has been of most benefit in the upper years, where work is now tailored more effectively. This consistency is not yet evident across the whole school. Teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. Here, planning is good and makes suitable links between subjects with an appropriate balance of basic skills. The pace of lessons is generally appropriate. The good teaching in Years 4 to 6 also has these characteristics but work is more clearly individualised, ensuring pupils are consistently challenged and so make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

One major reason why pupils enjoy school is because of the good curriculum they receive. The high levels of deprivation within the local community have meant that a major priority is placed on a flexible approach to pupils' learning. This combines basic skills, strong pastoral support and exciting experiences. For example, pupils have made damper bread in the outside clay oven that they built.

There are very many clubs and activities as well as day and residential visits and visitors. Another priority relates to themed weeks. These have resulted in some superb enhancements to the school, including a Sussex apple garden, an outside maze and an Egyptian tomb complete with mummified fish! All this has helped pupils see a purpose to their learning. The school recognises that it is early days and that the recent upturn in standards by Year 6 is only the beginning. Developments now need to be reflected in higher academic standards throughout the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils is good, a fact which the overwhelming majority of parents confirm. There is outstanding pastoral care, which includes multi-agency support, the use of learning mentors and support for personal problems. There are robust and highly effective safeguarding procedures aimed at supporting both pupils and their families. Pupils new to the country are tracked very well through the good induction programmes.

Across the school, strong assessment provides an early identification of problems. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are excellently supported by teaching assistants. All staff are adept at diverting any potential crisis linked to behaviour, thus ensuring that the learning of others is not disrupted. Assessment procedures have been significantly strengthened and are being used increasingly effectively to guide group work. However, this information is not always used so well at individual class level. For instance, marking, while satisfactory and at its best very good, does not always provide pupils with information about how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management are the key reasons why the educational provision for pupils has improved. The very strong direction provided by the headteacher inspires the rest of the staff with a clear sense of purpose. A strong senior leadership team with complementary

strengths ably supports him. The key priority has been to build sustainable improvements and provide the right building blocks for learning. The learning environment has been transformed with outside facilities that the parents and pupils can be proud of. This has helped reduce vandalism and attitudes to school have significantly improved. While it has taken some time to stem the high levels of exclusion and improve behaviour, the first signs of better academic progress are now evident.

The good self-evaluation is reflected in the realistic and comprehensive school improvement plan. This is rightly aimed at making achievement consistent through each year and raising overall standards. Governance is satisfactory. Experienced governors have supported those who are new and, as a body, they are becoming increasingly effective. This includes supporting the aims of the school and starting to monitor its work more efficiently. As yet this does not fully extend to them confidently challenging any decisions that are taken.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	2

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	2
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	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	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

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Moulsecoomb Primary School, The Highway, Moulsecoomb, Brighton BN2 4PA

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. It was good to talk to so many of you and hear about all the improvements that have happened to your school. As I promised some of you, I have included some of the main points of our report below.

- You are clearly proud of your school. You told us how much better it is and we agree. In particular, we think that all the new outside areas are very exciting.
- You behave well. You enjoy playing together and look after each other when there are problems. Keep it up.
- We have seen that you make satisfactory progress through the school and good progress in the juniors. You rightly said you thought that it was during these years that you made the most progress. However, more of you could be getting higher standards in English, mathematics and science. This is something that your teachers also know, so they will be trying to make sure that this happens. This will help you make consistently good progress in each year.
- We think you are cared for and supported well, especially those of you who find learning difficult. This is because much of the teaching caters for your needs. When this is done well, it is where teaching is at its best. We could see when this was happening by how hard you all concentrated.
- We think that your headteacher and all his senior staff are doing a good job at making sure that you get the best possible start to your education. They have tried to make sure that in lessons you get the challenges that you should and that your work is exciting.
- You have wonderful help from all the people who are involved around the school. We managed to meet many of them and know that they are very expert at helping both you and your families. It is something that many of your parents and carers talked to us about.

Finally, we wish you all the best for the future. You can play your part in the improvements by continuing to work hard, behaving well and making sure that everybody knows how much your school has improved.

Yours sincerely,

David Collard (Lead inspector)