

Alfriston School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114385
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311577
Inspection date	4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	99
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	16
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Soulsby
Headteacher	Linda Marion Appleby
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	North Road Alfriston Polegate BN26 5XB
Telephone number	01323 870203
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Alfriston School is smaller than most primary schools. Although the majority of children join the school in Reception, the last part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), a higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school in other year groups. Apart from the Reception class, pupils are taught in classes consisting of two year groups. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The majority of identified needs relate to behaviour, emotional and social, or speech, language and communication difficulties. The school holds Healthy School, Eco-School, Dyslexia Friendly and Activemark awards. The headteacher has taken up her post since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Alfriston is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection, giving it a good foundation for ongoing improvement. Teaching is good throughout the school and enhanced provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to give pupils frequent access to modern technologies, which promotes learning successfully. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all the school offers, including the outstanding care, guidance and support for their children. This was accurately summed up by one parent whose child did not begin his education in the school, 'It's lovely to be involved with a caring school, where parents and children are listened to and where it has a friendly atmosphere,' and in another comment, 'My child has been happy since Day One.' Another parent rightly summarised the school's recent journey, 'We have seen the school go from strength to strength.'

A good curriculum and well planned, interesting lessons help pupils to enjoy school and to achieve well. Children's attainment when they join the school is broadly average and good provision means that most reach and many exceed the levels expected for their age by the end of the EYFS. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the rest of the school to reach above average standards in the Year 6 tests. Teachers and teaching assistants know the needs of pupils very well and use this knowledge effectively to provide the support they need to achieve well, particularly when a child needs additional help and guidance. The school's commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils is seen in the success of a Dyslexia Friendly School award. Teachers' marking gives pupils good feedback on the quality of their work, but they recognise that they do not always set short-term targets or give pupils enough opportunities to follow up errors or weaknesses in their work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Parents are appreciative of the many enrichment opportunities and excellent links with the community which help pupils to develop confidence and understand what it means to be part of a community. Pupils enjoy a large number of well attended clubs and some activities which they can enjoy alongside their parents. For example, on the day of the inspection, a local bookshop organised an activity for children and their parents to make Christmas decorations in the school hall. Pupils are listened to and, as a result, they have very positive attitudes to school. They are respected and, in return, show respect and have good manners in their dealings with one another and with adults. They behave exceptionally well and are responsible young people.

The headteacher has a clear view about the direction for the school and her enthusiasm is instrumental in the school living its mission to be, 'Fair, Friendly, Fulfilling and Fun'. Leadership and management are good and there is a strong sense of teamwork across all aspects of the school. Senior staff and governors evaluate the work of the school accurately and take the necessary action to ensure the ongoing success of provision. For example, the school has good plans in place to improve the outdoor area for the EYFS to give children more opportunities for creative development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good provision and effective links with parents enable children to settle quickly. The Reception class is a hive of activity, but warm and calm relationships mean that children are relaxed and sustain their concentration for long periods of time. The careful balance between

adult-guided activities and play keeps children interested and learning fun. Staff know the children and their needs very well and plan stimulating activities which effectively promote children's development. Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points. Children's attainment as they join the school varies considerably but, taken together, is around the level expected for their age. Last year, most children met the early learning goals and some exceeded them by the end of the EYFS. Careful attention is given to pupils' personal and social development, so that from their earliest days in the school children begin to explore their own feelings and how their actions impact on others. The environment is stimulating, with children regularly involved in creating structures for themselves, for example, 'The Stable' in the role-play area. The outdoor area is used well to complement facilities in the relatively small classroom. Leadership and management of the EYFS is good. Funding has been set aside to improve this area further so that learning can be promoted within a natural environment and provide more opportunities for construction activities and creative play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have more short-term targets and that they are given enough opportunities to follow up the advice given to them when their work is marked.
- Implement the plans to enhance the EYFS outdoor area.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are generally above average and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils make steady progress year on year so that their final results in the Year 6 national assessments represent good achievement from their starting points. There is a little variation in standards from year to year because of the small numbers in each year group, but all subjects follow a similar overall attainment pattern with no significant variations between subjects. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment in reading is particularly high, with almost all pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in the Year 6 test last year. Last year, there was a significant improvement in the Year 2 writing tests. Currently, the school is focusing on the teaching of writing and mathematics to try to improve standards further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding, because of the rich range of opportunities they are given. For example, pupils study other cultures and faiths and they encounter these first hand through reciprocal visits to two other schools from different communities. The school council has a very active role in suggesting ways in which the school can improve its provision and this elected body gives pupils a good understanding of the meaning of citizenship. Pupils know that their opinions are valued and are clear as to what to do if they have any problems. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because it is consistently well managed by adults and pupils have an excellent understanding of the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are very clear that bullying is not tolerated and feel staff are kind and sympathetic towards their needs. They really enjoy school, having good attendance and displaying very positive attitudes because they have so many opportunities to be involved in activities which interest and enthuse them. Work within the school to achieve Healthy School status has helped pupils to develop a strong awareness

of what makes a healthy lifestyle, shown in sensible lunchboxes and keen participation in physical activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school regularly monitors the quality of teaching and learning and uses this understanding well to share ideas and improve practice. Lessons are well planned by knowledgeable teachers who set activities to meet the needs of the age range and differing abilities within each class. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported effectively through personalised action plans, developed with pupils and their parents, and often with the skilled support of teaching assistants. Good questioning helps pupils to think things through for themselves, but teachers also explain things well. Pupils understand the purpose of each activity and there are effective strategies, such as thumbs up or down, to help them to evaluate their learning for themselves. Teachers' day-to-day assessments are rigorous and they use this information well to adapt their planning for future lessons. The new marking system of 'two stars and a wish' provides pupils with good feedback on their success in reaching the key objectives of the lesson and is helping them to identify the next steps in their learning. Sometimes, pupils are not given follow-up opportunities to help them to fulfil this 'wish' and to reach their next target.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The new curriculum designed around topics provides enjoyable experiences through its strong cross-curricular links. It meets the needs of all pupils and has a positive impact on their achievement. Numeracy and literacy have links to the new topics but progress in these areas is monitored separately. Curriculum planning ensures that skills are developed systematically and an overview by the subject leaders ensures there is no repetition of subject matter. Staff are aware that they have still to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing pupils' skills to enable them to make further changes. The curriculum provides a relevant and local dimension to pupils' learning, for example the contribution pupils make to local activities and the very effective links with a local conservation agency. As one parent reflected, 'The curriculum has given them a sense of belonging to the local community.' The wide range of visits and a large number of visitors ensure relevance for pupils and also add to the enjoyment. Theme days are particularly popular because pupils are able to suggest how they want the events taken forward, and mean that the school can unite to enjoy similar experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The excellent pastoral care for pupils is reflected in the warm, friendly school environment. Each person within the school is valued as an individual and the mutual respect between adults and pupils is very strong. This leads to pupils being confident and having a mature approach. They respond very well to the opportunities to be involved in all aspects of school life. For example, when pupils contribute to the school development plan or help to conduct a risk assessment for the school disco. Such activities are highly successful in helping pupils to understand how to take care of themselves. Procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare meet statutory requirements. Pupils' academic progress is monitored regularly and action taken

quickly if a pupil is not making the expected progress. A wide range of special support programmes is very effective in ensuring that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Support is provided by external agencies when necessary. The school does much to develop key skills, including activities to raise pupils' economic and financial awareness, which prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets an exceptionally clear direction and vision for the school which she effectively communicates to all staff and governors. The recently established senior team is having a positive impact on the school. The school improvement plan has appropriate areas identified for development, and had been reached through an accurate and rigorous self-evaluation of the school's performance and in consultation with all interested parties. There are good systems through regular observation of teaching for staff to develop their practice by sharing the most effective approaches with each other. Governors are very effective in their monitoring of resources in the school. They challenge staff on standards and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and influence the strategic direction of the school well. Some subject leaders are relatively new to their current areas of responsibility, and are beginning to have a greater role in leading their subjects, knowing that they need to have a greater focus on monitoring standards in order to measure the impact of initiatives.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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**

5 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alfriston School, Alfriston, BN26 5XB

Thank you for making us so welcome during our time with you. We thoroughly enjoyed hearing you tell us about all the interesting things you do in school. We agree with you that Alfriston School is a good school.

These are some of the best things we found:

- You make good progress and reach above average standards because your teachers help you well and make lessons interesting.
- You behave exceptionally well and feel very safe and secure as you say that there is always someone to talk to if you need to.
- All adults take good care of you and encourage you to take care of yourself, for example when some of you carried out a risk assessment for the school disco.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants plan lots of interesting things, such as joint activities with other schools, which makes learning fun for you.
- The school council helps adults to know what you all think.
- Your headteacher and staff work well together and are constantly finding new ways to make your school even better.

We agree with your teachers about the most important things to do next:

- To make sure that you have shorter-term targets and that you have a chance to show teachers that you have achieved their 'wish' in your next piece of work.
- To use the plans that you have helped to make to improve the outdoor area for Class 1.

You can help them by making sure that you understand exactly how to achieve the 'wish' and by continuing to put your ideas forward about how the school can improve even further.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. It was very helpful to hear what they think about the school. We wish everyone at Alfriston School well in the future. Keep up the good work.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector