

Hamsey Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114394
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311580
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Bastid
Headteacher	Mike Hirst
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2003
School address	Cooksbridge Lewes BN8 4SJ
Telephone number	01273 400370
Fax number	01273 400370

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Hamsey Primary School is a very small village school, at the heart of its community. The three classes have mixed age groups, with some year groups having only two children. Pupils come from both rural and urban settings, with many choosing to come to the school from some distance. There have been significant levels of mobility in the school and a number of pupils, including Traveller children of Irish heritage, have experienced alternative educational settings. Until the appointment of the current headteacher, the school went through an unsettled period with several changes of leadership.

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 school with some strengths. It is an improving school, with a warm and friendly atmosphere where pupils behave well. Pupils receive good care, support and guidance, which promote their good personal development, as does the range of enrichment opportunities that help them engage in learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They feel safe and understand a good deal about leading healthy lifestyles. Good leadership by the headteacher has helped the school to start to recover from an unsettled period. There is now a clear direction for improvement and the very positive comments from parents show a real confidence in the work of the school.

Current standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Very recently, through the support provided by the headteacher and the local authority, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and is satisfactory overall. This improvement is beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards and achievement further, which have been erratic in Key Stage 1 since the last inspection. At Key Stage 2, although standards are average, they have shown some improvement, particularly in English and science. In mathematics, standards have slipped slightly and pupils are not achieving well enough in Key Stage 2. Some more able pupils are attaining above average standards in Year 6, but very few pupils are reaching standards above those expected for their age in Year 2. Teachers are not using assessment information consistently to ensure that the work always challenges the more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily and are often supported well in lessons.

Recent changes have improved behaviour, the school's links with parents and its systems for assessment. Improvements have also been made to the curriculum, which is satisfactory. More emphasis is being placed on the development of skills across the age groups within each class. This work is often supported by links made across subjects, giving more structure to pupils' learning. This is helping pupils to improve their basic skills and preparing them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

The local authority is providing good support for the headteacher and this has been key to putting the school back on an even keel and in a position to improve further. Accurate self-evaluation ensures that the school knows it needs to improve the satisfactory quality of teaching further if standards and achievement are to rise. Where work is planned well to meet their different abilities and ages, pupils make good progress but their progress is uneven because this good practice is not applied consistently. The governing body undertakes its responsibilities well and is now in a better position to monitor the school's progress towards its goals and to question the school's actions.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is effective. One parent stated, 'My child is getting the best possible start.' Most children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age, although a small number have weaknesses in communication and language development. Children settle into school quickly and make satisfactory and often good progress in Reception. This is due to the well-planned curriculum and good teaching. Strong emphasis is placed on developing their language skills. Children have a wide range of

learning opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom. By the time they leave Reception, they are working close to the levels expected of them nationally in all areas of learning. The classroom is an exciting learning environment and outside there is sufficient large play equipment. The outside area designated for the Foundation Stage is a little too small to allow children to gain good physical activity involving running, climbing and riding. However, the school often makes use of its large playground and field to support children's physical development satisfactorily. The school has plans to develop the outside play space.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school, ensuring all pupils achieve well.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school to raise standards and achievement.
- Use assessment data more rigorously to raise teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can achieve.

A small proportion of 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

Because of the very small number of pupils in each year group, comparisons with national figures are difficult. However, in Key Stage 1, standards have been well below average for the last two years although showed some improvement in 2007. This was largely due to a legacy of underachievement, brought about by weaknesses in the teaching. Satisfactory teaching now enables pupils in Years 1 and 2 to make better progress and reach the levels expected of them nationally. The school's own tracking shows that these pupils are on course to achieve satisfactorily by the end of this academic year. In Key Stage 2, standards have been lower in mathematics than in English and science. Support from the local authority and the headteacher has helped raise the quality of teaching so that standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. In spite of these improvements, too few pupils attain levels beyond those expected for their age in any subject.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, whilst their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have good opportunities to observe first-hand the wonders of nature in their rural setting. Although the school plans activities such as topics on China, for example, pupils do not yet learn enough about the multicultural world in which they are living. Pupils' behaviour is good because of their good social and moral development. They talk openly about minor instances of bullying, but they are reassured by staff and do not feel bullying is a problem. They thoroughly enjoy school and are able to speak knowledgeably about healthy lifestyles. The recent improvement in their basic skills prepares them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being. Pupils' links with the community, both locally and further afield, are strong. Parents say the school plays a large part in the life of the community. In spite of the school's efforts to make further improvements, attendance is just below average, caused mainly by taking holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection the school has had a number of issues to resolve in order to improve the quality of teaching. With support from the local authority, the school feels it has 'turned the corner' on this issue. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Daily planning illustrates that teachers generally provide suitable challenging work for the mixed-age groups they teach. However, pupils' books suggest that there is still some way to go in challenging the most able pupils. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and the small classes enable them to know their pupils well. Pupils say that this is one of the reasons they like the school. Teachers use their interactive whiteboards well to involve and motivate pupils. They manage and promote discussions effectively. Occasionally, however, some boys are not wholly engaged when the teacher's introductions or the lessons are too long. Teaching assistants usually give good support to learners. Teachers' marking is inconsistent, with the best marking helping pupils to see how to improve their work. Pupils are set realistic targets for improvement and many can talk about them. Older pupils say they would like to know how they could improve their work in relation to the levels of the National Curriculum.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum has some good features and continues to develop positively. Emphasis is rightly placed on the development of literacy and numeracy, which is now more focused on the development of skills, although this is not yet embedded in practice across the school. The school's careful mapping ensures coverage of the National Curriculum. It is made more interesting by links that are being developed between subjects, giving pupils a range of opportunities, for example, to develop their writing skills. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of after-school clubs, based mainly on a sporting theme. Pupils also talk, with excitement, about visits they have made to museums and to the theatre, and about the residential visit they will make. All of these activities provide extra opportunities for pupils to experience learning at first-hand and improve their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers know their pupils well and talk about them with great knowledge and understanding. The headteacher knows all the children well. He has done a great deal to improve relationships with parents, who universally responded positively to the inspection questionnaire. They are confident that their children are safe and well cared for, with one saying, 'I am delighted with the quality of care my child receives.' The school's child protection procedures are robust. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly and rigorous risk assessments are made prior to visits. The importance the school places on promoting healthy lifestyles shapes pupils' attitudes to health, including food and physical activities. In class, they receive good support from adult helpers, with some teachers giving good advice through the careful marking of work. Staff monitor and discuss pupils' progress during half-termly meetings and set new targets. Based on assessment information, the targets set for the more able pupils show that teachers' expectations of what they might achieve are not high enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the part played by the headteacher in moving the school forward over the last two years has been good. He has focused on issues such as improving behaviour, involving parents more actively, creating a bright environment and re-establishing an effective assessment system. Parents say their ideas are invited and involvement encouraged. Efforts to improve teaching are having a positive effect, leading to better standards and achievement for all pupils. However, the considerable backlog of underachievement means this is taking some time to overcome. There are clear signs of improvement in the Foundation Stage and in some areas of the curriculum, such as in reading. Developing the role of middle managers has rightly been left in abeyance until overall improvements in teaching have been managed further. The headteacher currently undertakes these tasks. The school is beginning to evaluate its progress more closely, enabling the headteacher, with support from the local authority, to set a very clear direction for improvement. Governors are supportive of the headteacher and now receive much better impartial information, so that they can make informed decisions, ask appropriate questions and hold the school to account for its actions. With the continuing support of the local authority and governors, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve 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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamsey Primary School, Cooksbridge, BN8 4SJ

Thank you all for making me welcome and helping me when I visited your school. I was pleased to see how happy you were in school and was impressed by your good behaviour. Several of you were able to tell me a lot about healthy living.

In the past, some children have not always done as well as they might, but now your school is giving you a satisfactory education. Standards are broadly average and most of you are making satisfactory progress. Many children in the Reception class are making good progress. The teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching in the Foundation Stage. I think, though, that some of you could do even better if the work was matched more closely to what each of you can do. You and your parents find the headteacher and staff very approachable and think that they have been successful in making the school a place where you are helped to grow in confidence.

The school is working hard to make the curriculum more interesting by putting subjects together in topics. You say you enjoy this and you also enjoy the activities planned for you after school.

You are looked after well by the school and it is this that makes you feel safe. Those of you who need extra help receive it and make the same progress as everyone else. I now want your teachers to help you make even more progress in English, mathematics and science, so that you all achieve well. The teaching needs to be even better to help you do this and I have asked the teachers to ensure that those of you who are capable of doing harder work have more challenging targets to help you do even better.

You can all help, too, by continuing to work hard and do your best, and making sure that you come to school every day.

Thank you again for making my day at your school so interesting.

With best wishes
Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones Lead inspector