

Portslade Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114413
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311588
Inspection dates	6-7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Steer
Headteacher	Dawn Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Locks Hill Portslade Brighton BN41 2LA
Telephone number	01273 418850
Fax number	01273 430240

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average infants' school in an urban area on the outskirts of Brighton. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. There is a well-attended breakfast club and after-school provision. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Principal amongst these are the excellent curriculum and the outstanding provision for children in the Reception classes. Pastoral care is also a key strength of the school. As one parent commented, 'The school is very nurturing and inclusive.'

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards are rising quickly and are above average overall by the end of Year 2. Children in the Reception classes make outstanding progress in most areas of learning. Progress is then good overall in the rest of the school, with pupils making the best progress in Year 2, but slightly slower progress in Year 1. In English, standards are consistently lower in writing than in reading. Over the last year, the school has rightly been focusing on improving standards in writing across the school and progress is now satisfactory. However, teachers still miss opportunities to challenge the more able in writing lessons and this slows progress, especially in Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants, and this helps them to make good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils rightly say this is 'a healthy, safe school' and that 'the playground is a happy place'. Behaviour is good. Relationships are very good and pupils play well together. They demonstrate outstanding enjoyment of school and highly positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils are keen to explain what they enjoy most, with one commenting that, 'I like work and finding out about things.' A parent praised the 'huge number of opportunities for my daughter to have fun while learning'. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through a wide range of activities. They take a pride in their school and enjoy helping to improve the environment. Pupils acquire a wide range of important skills, such as working together, to ensure that they are well prepared for their future lives.

There is a great deal of good or better teaching in the school and this has a strong impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Teachers plan their lessons very well and they make learning fun and motivating for pupils. There is good support for those who are struggling with their work. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what more-able pupils can do, especially in writing. The rich curriculum provides exciting learning opportunities for pupils of all ages. The stimulating variety of additional activities, visits and visitors provides excellent enrichment to the curriculum and adds greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Parents are rightly very complimentary about the care given to their children and the school works exceedingly well with outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported. Excellent links with parents and visitors help to ensure that, as one parent put it, 'there is a real community spirit within the school'. However, academic guidance is still being embedded, and marking and target setting do not always do enough to help pupils to know how well they are doing or how they could improve.

Good leadership and management are driving forward improvements in all areas, with the relatively new headteacher having a very positive effect on overall school effectiveness. As one parent commented, 'I have witnessed huge but positive changes during the past 12–18 months.' The school's excellent self-evaluation processes are very rigorous and identify appropriate priorities for further improvement. Governors fulfil their roles and responsibilities well.

The large number of positive comments from parents demonstrates their overwhelming support for the school. One parent summarised the views of many, saying, 'We are very impressed with every aspect of Portslade Infants... such an inspiring school.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

All aspects of the Foundation Stage are outstanding. Pupils are helped to settle in quickly when they come into the Reception classes and they rapidly gain confidence, reaching above-average standards by the end of the year. They develop excellent personal and social skills and make outstanding progress in most areas of learning. Their progress in writing is weaker, in common with the rest of the school, but a recent focus on improving skills is already having a positive effect. Outstanding leadership ensures that the excellent teaching is very well planned so that it motivates children to love their learning. The exciting curriculum offers an outstanding variety of stimulating learning opportunities. The attractive classrooms and outside areas provide an excellent and safe environment that inspires learning. One parent echoed the views of many, saying that 'this school gives children a fantastic start to their education'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers always expect enough of moreable pupils, especially in writing activities in Year 1.
- Make sharper use of marking and target setting to help pupils know how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Children start school with skills and capabilities that are similar to those found nationally. Reception Year children make outstanding progress in most areas of learning. Their development of writing skills is weaker, as throughout the school, and writing standards are average when they join Year 1. Pupils' overall progress in Year 1 is satisfactory and it is good in Year 2, so that by the time pupils are ready to move on to their new schools, they have made good progress overall. Standards are improving and are above average in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2. However, writing standards, which have been lower in the past few years, are only now approaching the national average, with no pupils reaching Level 3 in last year's national assessment tasks. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of more-able pupils, especially in Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding. As one parent said, 'This is a very happy school.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In assembly, several pupils played African drums enthusiastically and all embraced the lively rhythm. Most pupils behave well because teachers make the learning fun. Bullying is rare and is quickly dealt with. Pupils feel safe and listened to and enjoy being trained as 'playground buddies'. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. The school's good efforts are helping to reduce absences.

Pupils are proud to be Eco and School Councillors and feel they are making a positive difference to their environment. 'My child feels very valued,' wrote a parent. Pupils raise funds for a school in Africa and are involved in the wider community, such as in the recent 'Children's Parade'. They have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives and show this by taking part in the 'cooking academy' and planting vegetables. Preparation for their future lives is also good and reflects pupils' generally good basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are progressing well in their learning because of the good quality teaching they are receiving. In some classes and in different year groups, teaching is outstanding. Lessons are planned carefully throughout the school and this ensures that both the basic skills and subject-specific skills are developed as pupils become more proficient. Lessons are well managed and organised and many have a good pace. There is some variability of teaching between year groups. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is usually because pupils are expected to sit for too long without being actively engaged or because the level of challenge they are given does not match their potential, especially in writing. This is more noticeable in Year 1 than in the rest of the school, although even here there is some outstanding teaching. Assessment is developing but not all pupils are involved in checking their own learning so that they can understand how well they are doing and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Following an extensive overhaul, the school has revitalised the curriculum so that it is exciting, extremely well balanced and very highly relevant to pupils' needs and interests. Teachers have a newly found enthusiasm for what they are teaching and this comes across strongly through the excellent array of visits, visitors, topics and special themed weeks. In Year 1, pupils talked keenly about the 'bee man's' visit and enjoyed researching facts about different bugs. Very good use is made of practical, investigative and independent activities to successfully motivate, stimulate and excite pupils' interest. Pupils are very enthusiastic about all that the school offers. For example, one pupil commented that 'Everyone loves maths.' A major strength is the way that the curriculum balances both personal and academic development but has also rightly prioritised the need to continue the drive to raise standards. As a result, teachers provide a wealth of stimulating learning opportunities. As one parent put it, 'The school makes a great job of ensuring the children's learning is well rounded and fun.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Strong personal care contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and their personal development. In this very caring community, all relationships are nurtured. Safeguarding, risk assessment, and health and safety procedures are robust and meet requirements. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very strong links and partnerships with external agencies and parents further enhance the care of vulnerable pupils.

Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and underachievement is identified quickly. The use of target setting and marking is developing across the school, but is not yet consistent. For example, most pupils know they have targets for learning, but many could not remember them. This means that pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Under the headteacher's excellent leadership, leaders at all levels set good, clear direction for improvement. The enthusiastic senior leadership team provides strong support in monitoring provision and their dynamic approach is helping to raise standards. There is a shared vision and strong teamwork across the school. Excellent partnerships are developed with a wide range of local businesses and organisations to enhance the school's provision.

There are outstanding self-evaluation processes, including very comprehensive and informative documentation, rigorous tracking of progress and in-depth analysis of performance data. Subject leaders are quickly developing more active monitoring roles so that they can get an even clearer overall picture of provision in their subjects. Leaders set realistic, but appropriately challenging targets for pupils to reach by the end of Year 2, and these are regularly reviewed. However, targets are not always challenging enough in Year 1.

School leaders have worked hard, together with outside agencies, to raise attendance figures considerably since the last inspection. They have also raised standards, which are on an upward trend and are improving, particularly in the focus area of writing. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to make further improvements.

Governors provide well-informed support and use their considerable expertise well to challenge the school to ensure full accountability. They undertake their monitoring roles conscientiously. New governors are gaining experience to provide similar support.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	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

8 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Portslade Infants' School, Portslade BN41 2LA

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel very welcome and we enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a good school that helps you to do well in your work and cares for you very well.

These are the things we especially like about your school:

- You are friendly and helpful and your behaviour is good. Well done!
- You enjoy school very much and are keen to do your best.
- Yours is an extremely caring school where you look after each other very well.
- There are some excellent links with other groups that help your school to give you some additional activities to enjoy.
- You have good teachers who work very hard to help you make good progress and achieve well.
- Your school provides excellent learning activities that help you have fun in your lessons and make learning exciting for you.
- Children in the Reception classes have an outstanding start to their school life.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors are leading the school well and are working hard to make it even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

These are the things we think your school could do even better:

Your teachers could:

- Help you to improve your writing by making sure that work is set at the right level for pupils who learn quickly, especially in Year 1.
- Make better use of marking and targets to help you to know how well you are doing now and how to improve your work.

You could help by always working hard and trying to do your very best. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future learning. Keep up the good work!

With very best wishes

Jacquie Buttriss Lead Inspector

Annex B

8 May 2008

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Jacquie Buttriss
Lead Inspector