

Punnetts Town Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114414
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311589
Inspection date	3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Craigan Barnett
Headteacher	Shirley Frankis
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Battle Road Punnetts Town Heathfield TN21 9DE
Telephone number	01435 830361
Fax number	01435 830924

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management, gathering evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and school documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, two governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but evidence gathered suggests that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, are accurate, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. The social mix amongst pupils is wide, but many come from favourable backgrounds. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Children's abilities when they start school are typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly lower than the national picture. Children are organised into a Reception and Year 1 class, a Years 2 and 3 class, a Years 4 and 5 class and a Years 5 and 6 class. The school is being federated with another in January 2008 and an acting headteacher is leading the school this term.

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 which has a number of strengths. Pupils develop their personal abilities effectively and the school promotes a strong caring ethos that helps pupils feel secure. It is popular with parents, who particularly appreciate the way the school treats its pupils. One comment reflected many others: 'The school has a fantastic ethos and always holds the children's best interests at heart'. Relationships with some parents, however, have been strained following the decision to federate with another school.

Adults know the pupils very well as individuals and provide good levels of care and guidance. Good arrangements are in place to safeguard them and to provide well for those who have learning difficulties. As pupils are closely supported, they feel safe, able to express their views and enjoy coming to school. This helps their personal qualities to thrive. Pupils have good levels of day-to-day guidance in their work. An ethos of respect runs through the work of the school, of which pupils readily speak highly. One pupil's view reflected many others: 'All staff are willing to help you and don't make you feel silly'. The tone is set by a caring team of staff, aided by the positive leadership of the acting headteacher who joined the school at the beginning of this term. Pupils leave as mature and thoughtful learners well prepared for later life.

Children enter the school with broadly typical levels of skills and abilities. They settle in quickly and make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year. The recent completion of a new outside activity area has the potential to allow children to have more 'free choice' to use equipment, which has been relatively limited until now. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics in national assessments. All pupils achieve well, but girls tend to do a little better than boys. This good foundation is not always built upon as they move up through the school because teaching does not consistently make the best use of information about pupils' rate of progress. As a result, pupils reach broadly average standards and achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave in Year 6. They make quicker progress in their speaking, listening and science skills, often reaching above average standards. In aspects of mathematics and writing, not all pupils in each year group make the progress of which they are capable as not all have sufficiently challenging work. The school has identified gaps in pupils' achievement, but there is not a uniform approach between classes to remedy weaknesses.

Through the school, teaching is typically satisfactory, but developing good relationships and providing interesting 'hands on' activities are stronger features of lessons. These are often based on topics such as the 'Rainforest' or 'Second World War', and help to motivate pupils who often say they enjoy lessons. At times, activities lack pace and sparkle, whilst class discussions are sometimes too long for pupils, who occasionally 'switch off'. This slows their progress. Science and information and communication technology skills are promoted effectively, but some aspects of writing are not taught consistently well. The assessment of pupils' work is regular, but this information is not often used carefully to set challenging work in every class. This causes some pupils to 'mark time' in their learning. Teachers set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond positively to these. Group work encourages good levels of cooperation. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, and help to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as their classmates.

The good provision that the school makes for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development helps them have a good sense of right and wrong. They play and work harmoniously together. They try to adopt healthy lifestyles. One pupil said, 'I know that I should eat five bits of fruit or vegetables each day, although it is difficult some days'. Pupils take plenty of exercise, not only through physical education lessons, but also through the many lively activities they enjoy at playtimes and after school through dance and sports clubs. Pupils develop very good links with their local community, often taking part in special events such as harvest festivals, local pageants and, recently, the 'World's largest coffee morning'. The school councillors are proud of their responsibilities and liked influencing some choices of equipment. Although pupils' awareness of their own culture is good, their knowledge of the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of others is a weaker aspect of their understanding.

The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and their good personal development and well-being. It enables teachers to plan some interesting activities, but planning in some topics in Years 1 to 6 does not ensure that there is a clear progression in skills. As a result, not all work is pitched at the right level. Planning to extend children's physical skills in the Foundation Stage is only just beginning to make use of the better facilities. A broad range of visits to places such as a local zoo, sea life centre and residential trips to France help to extend pupils' horizons. Staff from the nearby college assist with promoting physical education and artistic activities for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Parents are also encouraged to share in school life and readily support events such as family learning and 'open house' evenings.

The acting headteacher, who started this term, has succeeded in providing stability, prior to the federation next term, while re-evaluating some areas of the school's work. She has, for example, identified that assessment procedures are not used effectively. The leadership of subjects is inconsistent, so it is currently difficult to get a clear picture of what is needed to secure improvement. Realistic targets are set and pupils generally meet most of them. Governors make regular visits to oversee how initiatives are working and they have reviewed aspects of the school such as child protection arrangements. However, some concerns about the changes next term have not been fully addressed to reassure parents. The school has maintained its standards over several years despite significant building work and the impending changes. It has satisfactory capacity to improve further

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The small number of children in the combined Reception and Year 1 class have a satisfactory range of activities that develop their skills systematically. They make a smooth start and settle in quickly. Most socialise easily and their speaking and listening skills develop particularly well. Until recently, children's physical development and independent learning skills have been hampered by restrictions to the outside play area. The recent redevelopment of this area will extend the range of opportunities for children to broaden these skills and give pupils more 'free choice' to develop their independence. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but pupils' ability to settle in quickly, feel secure and relate well to others is promoted particularly well. The majority of children are likely to meet the goals expected of them by the end of their Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- give pupils more guidance on developing their writing skills, so they use a wider vocabulary, spell more accurately and write at greater length

- make better use of assessment information to plan work that enables all pupils to make consistently good progress in Years 3 to 6
- coordinate subjects more effectively so that strengths and weaknesses in provision are rigorously overseen to guide where improvements are needed most.

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.

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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	3
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	2
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?	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	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

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Punnetts Town Primary School, Punnetts Town, TN21 9DE

Thank you for your nice welcome when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed looking around. Yours is a satisfactory school which is trying to be even better. It has some really good things about it. Here are a few of the things I found out.

- you all really enjoy being at Punnetts Town and everyone I met seemed to feel it was a good place to be
- your new acting headteacher is helping the governors and other teachers to spot where things can get better
- you make satisfactory progress in your work and reach at least average standards by the time you leave and in some areas better than that
- the teaching is satisfactory and teachers succeed in explaining things carefully
- adults help make you feel grown up and mature
- you know that getting exercise, drinking water and eating certain foods are good for you
- the activities planned in lessons, such as the Second World War project, look interesting
- your school helps you to get involved in the local community, who support what you do by attending your plays.

I have asked the school to do three things to help it get even better:

- help you with your writing skills so you can spell really well and write some great stories or accounts
- keep a closer eye on how well you are doing so they can plan harder work for those of you that can cope with it
- keep a closer eye on different subjects just to make sure that they are all being studied as well as they can.

You can help by seriously thinking about what you can do to help your school get even better and then doing it.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector

Annex B

4 October 2007

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Kevin Hodge
Lead inspector