

# Rotherfield Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114416
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311591
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Hodge

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	132
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Gray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marianne Terry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2004
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	North Street Rotherfield Crowborough TN6 3NA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 852574
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 853974

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. When children enter the school, they have ability levels which are broadly typical for their age. Fewer than usual are entitled to claim free school meals. The number of pupils who have a statement of educational needs is higher than usually found. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provides for four- and five-year-old children, taught in the Reception class. The new headteacher was appointed since the last inspection. A new deputy headteacher and class teacher started this term. A small minority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or at the early stages of learning English.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Rotherfield is a good school. The headteacher, staff and governors work successfully together to create a school where pupils and parents alike recognise its close family atmosphere. One parent reflected the views of many by saying, 'The school has come on in leaps and bounds in the last 18 months'.

What are the main reasons for this success? Firstly, the school make the children's start to school as smooth as possible because there are well-developed links with families and their children. Carefully organised activities and good teaching enable them to make good progress. Next comes good welfare arrangements that cater well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable. All these factors help accelerate pupils' learning in an environment in which they feel safe and confident of the support of adults. Their good personal development results in them behaving exceptionally well as they know right from wrong.

Close behind come typically good teaching and learning which ensure that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. A small amount of teaching across the school does not always demand enough of the pupils. Occasionally, pupils wish they did harder work! Target setting is used throughout the school, but pupils are not fully aware of what their own targets are or how they can help them improve. Despite these variations in teaching, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils punctuate their written work carefully and use exciting words to make their writing lively. In mathematics in Years 1 to 6, pupils' calculation skills are often accurate, but they do not use these skills to solve problems often enough, which reduces their confidence. In science, pupils have achieved very well in national tests. The small number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English keep up with their classmates because of the close support they are given. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT), aided by the new computer suite.

Pupils appreciate and value their local community and they contribute enthusiastically to the life of the school. They have an excellent understanding of healthy living and really like exercise at playtimes. The good curriculum, which caters well for mixed-age classes, includes a wide range of activities beyond school which broaden pupils' experience and successfully raise their exercise levels.

Underpinning the increased pace of recent improvement are good leadership and management. The headteacher and staff work very well as a team and accurately identify improvements needed, such as writing last year. As a result, effective action has raised pupils' attainment, while ensuring their personal development and care. The views of pupils and parents are highly valued and their suggestions help shape school life.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The leadership of this age group is good. As a result of good preparation, children settle quickly and happily when they come into the Reception class. They enjoy the wide variety of exciting learning opportunities provided. As a result, children achieve well and reach standards which are above the national average. Many parents value the good start. The warm rapport between staff and children enables them to form good relationships with each other, which results in

excellent behaviour. Good personal and social education enhances children's well-being and they are all cared for closely. Teachers plan a good variety of motivating activities that develop children's basic skills and independence in their learning. Their writing, while not always displayed to best effect, develops well through simple activities. Teachers know the children well and use assessment information well to ensure that tasks match children's needs. The newly extended outside activity area provides improved facilities for physical and creative development. However, it is comparatively new and is not used to its full potential.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Give pupils in Years 1 to 6 more opportunities to use problem solving in their day-to-day activities so they reach higher standards in mathematics.
- Ensure that all teachers set consistently high expectations in class activities and help pupils have a more secure knowledge of their targets to guide their improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. They make a good start in the Reception class, which is steadily built upon in Years 1 to 6. By the time they leave, pupils reach above average standards. This good progress for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is aided by pupils' good personal development. The school has been quick to spot any groups of pupils who lag behind and, as a result, extra support is targeted effectively to compensate. Pupils achieve well in ICT following the increased focus it has across the curriculum as a whole. Science results in Year 6 have been above average recently. There are still some weaker areas in pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics as these activities are too infrequent. A focus on boosting pupils' writing skills has succeeded as pupils now write with confidence and flair. The school's own checks on current work indicate that the pupils' progress, including for those who are at the early stages of learning English, is good and improving. The school exceeded its challenging targets this year.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy, including knowing what is best to eat. They are active at playtimes, and 'activate' sessions help extend their efforts to keep fit. Pupils say they feel safe and secure as they know who to talk to with any concerns. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, they behave brilliantly. This aids their learning and some are keen for greater challenges. Pupils say there is no bullying. As one put it, 'No one would hurt anyone.' When asked what is best about school, one pupil immediately responded, 'Everything!' As a result, they attend school regularly and promptly. Pupils make a good contribution to their own community, for example through the work of the school council and playground friends. Pupils enjoy inviting family members to special days and the activities they help to plan for a local community group. The school links with schools further away to raise pupils' awareness of different cultural experiences but these are relatively underdeveloped. The pupils' confidence, ability to work together and good levels of basic skills prepare them effectively for their next school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Recent efforts to improve teaching are beginning to pay dividends, as it is now typically good throughout the school. Lessons are fun and well planned, and develop a broad range of pupils' skills. Very good relationships encouraged by staff mean that pupils, including those at the early stages of learning English, are keen to learn. Teaching sets a good pace in most lessons. It fosters pupils' appetite for learning, but the challenge set for them in some activities does not always stretch their abilities, particularly those who want to, or can, do more. The use of interactive whiteboards in class, and of computers in the new ICT suite, has helped extend pupils' computer-based skills and experience. The flexible use of small group teaching and personal support is effective in lessons and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have regular, specialised help. Teachers keep a close check on the progress of pupils' work by clear and informative marking which points to ways it can improve.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Learners of all ages respond positively to activities that cater well for mixed ages. One pupil spoke for many when she said, 'I like the lessons.' Good creative links between subject areas make learning relevant and engaging. ICT is widely used across the curriculum and there is regular use of the new suite. Good provision for personal, social and health education and a range of popular initiatives, such as 'Healthy Food Fridays', reinforce pupils' awareness of how to stay fit and well. An impressive range of well-attended additional activities, together with enjoyable visits and visitors to school, extend class work effectively. Pupils' writing is a focus for development and is already showing some improvement. Problem solving in mathematics, although identified for improvement, is not always integrated into everyday mathematical work.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support are a strength of the school. As one older pupil said, 'All the teachers are really supportive and helpful.' Pupils and adults alike respect and care for each other very well. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of recent improvements in identifying their needs and the provision of suitable, tailored support. The school has also developed good links with a variety of outside agencies to help support pupils and their families. The school's routines to safeguard pupils are effective and up to date. One parent spoke about the good support their family had received during a particularly difficult time. Good marking and effective use of self-assessment in some classes enable pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. However, while targets are included in books, not all pupils are familiar with their learning targets and this reduces the pace of their improvement.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher has successfully steered the school's improvement since her appointment, particularly in improving the quality of teaching, assessment routines and fabric of the school. Nearly all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire noticed and welcomed the improvements. The headteacher promotes good teamwork, although because the coordinators of some subjects and aspects are new, some actions and initiatives are not in place. However, there has been success in spotting where some year groups need extra help and in improving the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage children. The school wants to get even better, now aided by a settled senior management team. Its self-evaluation is good and leads to clear priorities, such as improving writing and problem solving in mathematics. It has clearly led to higher standards in writing. Parents and pupils are increasingly contributing to improvements, such as those regarding school uniform. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion, particularly in the local community. Governors now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They are aided by regular updates and visits to school to keep their 'finger on the pulse' of developments. The recent track record of improvement indicates a good capacity to improve.

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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?	2
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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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**

17 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Rotherfield Primary, Rotherfield TN6 3 NA

We liked visiting your school recently. Thank you for chatting to us so openly about what you thought. Yours is a good school that is trying hard to be even better. Here are some of the things that we thought were particularly good.

- You make good progress in your work and reach higher than average standards in your work by the time you leave, but your problem-solving skills in maths could still improve more.
- You all really enjoy being at the school as it has a good family atmosphere. You help make it a very happy place to be.
- Children in the Reception class have a smooth start to school and like their new outside area.
- You said you feel extremely safe and all the adults are good at helping you.
- You have an excellent understanding about how to keep fit and why eating certain foods are good for you.
- You behave brilliantly in class, in the playground and in worship time. (You sing really well in worship time too, especially with actions).
- Teachers make most lessons exciting, although some of you could be pushed just a bit more in your learning.
- Your headteacher, governors and other staff lead the school well and know what needs to be done to make it even better.

There are two things we have asked the school to do to help improve it some more.

- Give you more time to use your number skills to solve everyday maths problems.
- Help make sure that teachers really stretch your thinking and help you have a better understanding of your targets.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector