

Hawkes Farm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114438
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311602
Inspection date	31 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	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Hardwick
Headteacher	Valerie Cobb
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Hawks Road Hailsham BN27 1ND
Telephone number	01323 841466
Fax number	01323 440434

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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: support for pupils with lower abilities, the range and quality of lesson activities, and how governors challenge the school to improve. Evidence was collected from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and school documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but evidence collected suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are accurate, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a bigger-sized school than average. There is a wide social mix among pupils, with some coming from favourable backgrounds. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Children enter the school with levels of abilities that are typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties /and or disabilities is about half that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

From the moment you enter the school, meet the children and see the range of work they produce, it confirms the school's view that it provides an outstanding level of education. Parents accurately perceive the school as being 'top quality', 'excellent' and 'exceeding their best expectations'. The children get off to a good start in the Reception classes, where children's learning is organised to feel like fun. Their introduction to school is as smooth as possible, aided by helpful and informative pre-school links and a staggered start. Activities are conceived well in nearly all areas, although children's ability to work independently is limited in some activities. Their literacy, number and social skills develop well.

As pupils move through the school, their maturity develops quickly because of the high levels of care, support and personal development they receive. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and readily tell visitors what they enjoy most about it and how they want to help the school improve. The pupils value the school council's work, such as suggesting extra play equipment in their 'play bags' and by organising fundraising for their partner school abroad. Classmates value the roles of the 'play leaders' and 'peer mediators'. It develops a high level of responsibility, while fostering their feeling of security and enjoyment. Pupils who have learning difficulties/and or disabilities are supported very well by skilled support assistants so they make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Pupils receive high levels of academic guidance which helps them maintain their very good rates of progress. Discussions with teachers, good quality marking of pupils' work, simple target-setting and chats with classmates to discuss each other's work keep pupils' learning on course. Good links with secondary colleges for older pupils enable a smooth transfer. As staff take time to listen and are seen as extremely caring and approachable, pupils know that they will be helped if needed. This mix of ingredients results, not surprisingly, in pupils' excellent attitudes to each other and high standards of behaviour. One pupil summed up the views of others by saying, 'I wish all children could come here'.

The curriculum is top quality. One pupil remarked, 'I like doing English, mathematics and I really like doing all the other stuff', illustrating the good balance of academic work with other exciting activities to broaden pupils' knowledge. An excellent range of theme days, multi-arts and science weeks helps enliven and motivate the pupils' learning. Musical, artistic and physical education activities also figure highly. Key literacy, numeracy and science skills develop well at all levels. Where the school identifies comparative weaknesses, such as some pupils who found writing and mathematics less motivating, they provide innovative solutions to help remedy the problem such as a breakfast club for boys with a writing focus. Collections of work in all subjects show how pupils' skills in one subject help them in others, particularly their writing, mathematics and computer-based abilities. Activities both in class and beyond promote pupils' fitness to high levels. The pupil play leaders, trained by a local secondary college, help guide activities at playtimes. The school's 'healthy school' initiatives have resulted in pupils' determination to keep fit and eat healthily.

Pupils achieve very well because teachers harness the pupils' enthusiasm to learn extremely effectively and teach lessons to a very high standard. Teachers make excellent use of the well-thought-out plans to organise exciting work and encourage pupils to use their skills in different subjects. For example, studies of Greek history use computers effectively to convey research results. The computer suite is used well to promote pupils' skills, which develop quickly. All staff have extremely high expectations and make lessons fun, often making very good use

of new technologies to motivate pupils' learning. Teachers quickly spot those pupils who need extra help or those who need that extra push to achieve even better. To show parents and other teachers what is achievable, the pupils' best work is compiled into 'excellence' folders. Well-briefed teaching assistants help pupils make quick progress with low- key but skilful support. This good quality teaching builds on the good start in the Foundation Stage, so that pupils make outstanding progress and achieve very well in Years 1 to 6. This enables pupils to reach standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science when they leave the school. Past test results paint a consistent picture of well-above-average levels of attainment for both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. The quality of classwork confirms these levels of attainment. Their attainment in basic and more advanced skills sets them up confidently to make best use of their next stage in education and opportunities in later life.

Underpinning the success of the school is the top-notch quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. The school is involved in several exciting national and local initiatives to boost pupils' progress and facilitate local schools working together. The regular, accurate and rigorous self-evaluation means that senior staff are passionate to implement the well-crafted plans for further improvement. The views of parents and pupils, who suggested changes to homework and the provision of the play wall, for example, were quickly adopted. Beavering away in the background are the governors who challenge the school very effectively to maintain the high standards. They know the school very well, suggest areas to improve and act as a credible 'critical friend' to stop any hint of complacency. Based on its monitor record of success, this ensures the school has excellent capacity to improve still further. One parent accurately expressed the views of many by saying that the school was 'a very caring community in which to learn both academic and social lessons'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision is good because the new team of teachers have worked well together and ensured there is a very safe and secure environment for pupils to learn. This enables children to quickly build secure friendships and settle into school routines. Parents comment that their children are happy and eager to come to school. Children achieve well from their starting points, and the good emphasis on their personal development helps them gain early skills in writing, reading and particularly number work. Children follow a broad range of very interesting activities but these are often adult led. This does not allow sufficient opportunity for children to gain further independence by deciding for themselves what to do next. Good teamwork and enthusiastic teaching ensure that by the time they enter Year 1, most children reach, and a significant proportion exceed, the national expectations set for them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils in the Reception classes more opportunities to choose their own activities so they develop greater independence and confidence to direct their own learning.

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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?	1
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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?	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
How well 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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?	1
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	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

2 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hawkes Farm Primary School, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 1ND

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection I carried out recently. I really enjoyed looking around and I do think your 'play wall' is impressive. I think that Hawkes Farm is an outstanding school that has few areas to improve. Nearly all of your parents and carers agree with me that your school looks after you very well. Many said it was 'excellent' and they are right.

Here are some of the things I found out:

- You make excellent progress in your work and reach levels that are much better than those expected.
- The youngest children have a good start to school.
- All of you work hard to make the school the fun place that it is.
- You said the staff make sure that you feel safe and are very well looked after.
- You really like your work in subjects such as art, music and physical education.
- The teachers make lessons really interesting and keep a close eye on your progress.
- You all behave extremely well and the school really supports you if you need help.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work well together brilliantly to make the school a super place to be and for it to get even better if possible.

I have asked the school to look at just one thing to improve:

- To give the pupils in the Reception classes more opportunities to choose activities so they get even more confident in knowing how to improve their learning and gain experience in making their own choices.

You can help keep the school top quality by continuing to work hard and by helping the staff spot where more improvements can be made.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge Lead Inspector

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