

Motcombe Infants' School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	114460
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311611
Inspection date	18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mairi Baker
Headteacher	Fizz Starkey
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Macmillan Drive Eastbourne BN21 1SN
Telephone number	01323 728901
Fax number	01323 639418

Age group	4-7
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to a change to the report following a complaint

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the impact of strategies to raise achievement in reading and writing for the more able pupils, especially boys

how successfully the school is fine-tuning its assessment procedures and involving pupils more productively in knowing, understanding and using their individual targets to identify the next steps in learning.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, samples of pupils' work, parents' questionnaires, observations of pupils at lunchtime and a review of the school's own assessment and monitoring evidence. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

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Description of the school

The school is much larger than average for its type. Pupils come from a wide range of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Most are of White British heritage but a few are bilingual learners. Of these, a small number are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Attainment on entry varies considerably but is generally well below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the course of a year is often high, as in the current Year 2, which has experienced more than 20% mobility. The school has achieved a number of awards for its work in promoting healthy lifestyles, emotional health and well-being, international links and in recognition of its provision for basic skills, the arts and physical education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils flourish both academically and in their personal development. The driving force behind its success is its dynamic team of senior staff and governors, with an inspirational headteacher at the helm, whose very high aspirations for the school drive their relentless pursuit of excellence. The whole staff works exceptionally well together as a team with a shared vision. Rigorous self-evaluation and strong strategic direction give the school its outstanding capacity for continuing improvement. Most parents have a deservedly high opinion of the school and many wrote in praise of its numerous excellent qualities, for example: 'Motcombe is very good at valuing the children as individuals and working with each child's strengths and interests.' Another applauded the school's 'welcoming, happy, warm and positive atmosphere'. Pupils' views of the school are equally enthusiastic. They thoroughly enjoy learning and take part eagerly in all that the school has to offer.

This enjoyment stems principally from the outstanding curriculum, which takes excellent account of the pupils' varying needs and interests. Whether designing and making 'smoothies' to raise funds for 'Seeds for Africa' or following the world travels of 'Barnaby Bear', pupils are constantly engaged in meaningful, practical activities that stimulate their imagination and effectively cross the boundaries between subjects. Eye-catching displays around the school reflect the richness and variety of pupils' experiences. Pupils benefit from a superb range of additional activities, including yoga, karate, tennis and 'speed stacking'. Learning is an exciting journey that prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.

Teachers are very skilled at planning activities that engage and motivate pupils. Initiatives to improve pupils' knowledge of sounds and letters have had a marked impact on standards in reading and writing for all pupils, especially for boys and the more able pupils. Activities are matched exceptionally well to each pupil's needs and lessons move along at a brisk pace. In whole-class sessions, teachers skilfully direct specific questions to individual pupils, based on their knowledge of each pupil's stage of learning. This enables all to be involved and to gain a sense of achievement.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very high quality because it is integral to every aspect of school life. Storytelling and reflection times in the 'Enchanted Garden' provide times of peace and tranquillity. The 'Golden Rules' help pupils to think of and respect others. The school's superb range of international links extends pupils' horizons and enhances their appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity. Exceptionally good partnerships with a wide variety of external agencies and specialists greatly enhance pupils' personal and academic development. Most pupils' behaviour is exemplary because the school has very effective systems for encouraging them to resolve difficulties independently. A very small minority of parents are not confident about how these systems work. The school provides regular workshops for parents on a range of topics but these are not always well supported. It constantly strives to find ways to ensure that all parents fully understand and support its procedures.

Most pupils' attendance is good, but holidays taken in term time and the school's 'zero tolerance' policy on lateness keep its overall attendance rate at average levels. Pupils feel very safe at school because of the excellent care they receive. They grow in confidence and self-esteem and are encouraged to play a vital role in helping to improve the school. Pupils even work with the headteacher to produce their own version of the school improvement plan. The pupil council has been instrumental in making playtimes safer and more enjoyable. Pupils say the 'zoning'

of different areas of the playground, one of their own ideas, has made a huge difference. It allows them to participate safely in a wide range of vigorous activities that boost their health and wellbeing. In addition, the school's strong emphasis on leading healthy lifestyles encourages pupils to make informed choices about what to eat.

As a result of this outstanding provision, pupils make exceptionally good progress in all aspects of learning, often from low starting points. Standards rose to above average levels in 2007. In the current Year 2, where there is an unusually high proportion of pupils with additional needs, broadly average standards represent equally impressive progress, especially taking into account the high number of pupils who joined the year group more recently. Pupils make very good progress across a wide range of subjects, including science, art and computer skills. There are very rigorous systems for tracking the progress of every pupil. Frequent checks ensure that pupils are on course to meet their very challenging targets. Teachers involve pupils productively in discussing their targets and the progress they have made so that pupils know exactly what they need to do next. First-rate additional support for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties, and for those who arrive at school with little or no English, enables them to make remarkably good progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent induction arrangements ensure that children get off to a very good start and settle quickly into the school's routines. A very keen focus on their personal and social development helps children to develop positive attitudes to learning. They grow in confidence and soon know how they are expected to behave. The curriculum is exceptionally well planned around themes that skilfully incorporate all six areas of learning. Excellent teaching ensures that learning is stimulating and involves children in an exciting variety of 'hands-on' activities in the very well resourced classrooms and outdoor areas. There is a successful balance of activities that are led by adults and those that the children choose for themselves. Carefully structured play activities have a clear purpose and adults often interact with children to develop their learning and extend their speaking and listening skills. Excellent teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills gives children a very good grounding for future learning. Rigorous and regular ongoing assessments enable teachers to meet each child's particular needs. Outstanding leadership of the provision ensures consistently high quality learning. This enables children to achieve exceptionally well and reach the standards expected of them by the end of the Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take further steps to ensure all parents are confident about how the school deals with behaviour, and support the school's procedures.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	1

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	3
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

18 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Motcombe Infant School, Eastbourne BN21 1SN

I had a very enjoyable day in your school and I would like to thank you all for helping me. You were very friendly and made me feel very welcome. Thank you for talking to me about your school.

I am writing to tell you that Motcombe is an outstanding school - that means it is very, very good! Here are some of the things that make your school very special.

- You make excellent progress in your learning because your lessons are fun and there are lots of very interesting things for you to do.
- The adults look after you very well and help you to settle into school quickly so that you feel very safe and secure.
- You obviously enjoy school a great deal and you work very hard in your lessons.
- The school helps you to become confident and independent so that you will do well when you move on to your next school.
- You enjoy your jobs, such as being on the pupil council and helping in the playground, and you do them very well.
- The teachers often check how well you are doing and give you extra help if you need it.
- They ask you really good questions that make you think and work things out for yourselves.
- The adults who run the school do an excellent job. They are always checking how good the school is so that they can make it even better.

Most of you behave exceptionally well and keep to the 'Golden Rules' but sometimes there are problems that have to be sorted out. The teachers have some very good systems for helping you to try to sort out these problems for yourselves. A few of your parents do not understand how all of this works so I have asked the school to give them some more information. Perhaps you can help by explaining it too.

I hope you all continue to enjoy your time at Motcombe. Best wishes to those of you who will soon be moving on to the junior school.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner Lead Inspector

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