

Fairlight Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114487
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311622
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hazel Malpas
Headteacher	Martin Thorn
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	St Leonards Road Brighton BN2 3AJ
Telephone number	01273 601270
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school is situated close to the centre of Brighton. In the last three years there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, most of whom have little or no knowledge of English prior to joining the school. These now form substantial minorities in each year from Nursery to Year 2. Some stay for a relatively short period, so contributing to the rapid increase in pupil turnover in the lower part of the school. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is significantly above the national average. The school has gained Artsmark and Healthy Schools awards. The current headteacher was appointed on an interim basis by the local authority in October 2007. The school is seeking to appoint a permanent headteacher for September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. Although it still faces some challenges, the school is in a more secure position following new initiatives to address a fall in standards. There is a shared commitment to improvement and parents are supportive of recent developments. As one said, 'The school feels more positive than it has ever done.' Standards declined to a very low level three years ago. Since then there has been some improvement but there is still more to do, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' achievement is becoming more consistent but there is variation in how well they do across the school. Most children have skills well below those normally found when they enter Nursery. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception, so that, when they enter Year 1, the majority are working within the expected levels. Pupils have made erratic progress in Years 1 and 2 in recent years and standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been very low. Although standards are still too low, there is some improvement coming through. The proportion of pupils reaching above average levels is beginning to increase, particularly for those who have been in the school for an extended period. However, there is still scope to ensure that more able pupils make progress at a consistent rate. Standards in Year 6 have improved significantly in the current year and are now broadly average. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, although there is scope for improvement, again particularly for the more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and this enables them to make satisfactory progress. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language has increased rapidly. The school has deployed specialist support effectively to ensure that these pupils make sound progress in learning English. Inconsistencies in achievement have resulted from too much variation in the quality of teaching. While teaching is now satisfactory overall, there is a need for greater pace and challenge in all lessons so that pupils make faster progress. Assessment information is not always used effectively to guide lesson planning. New appointments have strengthened the senior leadership team. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate and there is clear determination to deal with accrued weaknesses. Middle managers are knowledgeable and empowered to drive through improvement. Better access to data and more thorough monitoring are supporting improved achievement. Effective recent actions have improved performance for pupils in Year 6 and indicate that the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is a particular strength of the school. This ensures that children get off to a good start. The Family Learning Initiative is valued by parents and enables them to support their child's education more effectively. Provision for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory and steps are being taken to strengthen aspects of teaching and assessment so that the rate of pupils' progress is increased. Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are happy to attend school; attendance has improved and is now broadly average. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and the importance of diet and exercise.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage offers children a good start. The environment is stimulating and relationships are positive. Most children enter Nursery with limited skills, particularly in personal and social development and in language, and staff rightly prioritise these aspects. Good teaching, underpinned by rigorous assessment and planning, ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning. However, much of this momentum is lost as only a few nursery children continue to Reception. The diverse experience of new entrants, many in the early stages of

learning English, means that on entry to Reception, overall skills are, again, well below average. As in Nursery, children in Reception make good progress. As a result, by the start of Year 1 the majority are working within the expected levels. However, only a few children are working at higher levels and there is a substantial group whose skills remain low. For most children, language is the weakest element and the school has rightly focused on developing their awareness of letter sounds. As a result, children are now making more rapid progress in this area. Children show good independence and have the confidence to initiate activities, sustaining concentration over a significant period.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English and mathematics, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and ensure that more able pupils achieve as well as they should across the school.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching to ensure greater consistency of pace and challenge. A small proportion of 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

While children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, progress in Years 1 and 2 has been more erratic, leading to very low standards at the end of Year 2. While weaker teaching in the past and lack of tracking data have contributed to unsatisfactory achievement, high mobility and a considerable increase in pupils with limited English are more significant factors now. Currently, achievement in Years 1 and 2 is broadly satisfactory. Although standards remain low, especially for the newer arrivals, pupils who have been in school over time are beginning to do better. There is still scope to increase the challenge for more able pupils, although several are now working at Level 3 in reading and mathematics, an improvement on 2007. In Year 6, overall standards have been well below average in the last three years, but with some variation across the subjects. Standards in mathematics have been particularly low but there has been some improvement in science where standards were broadly average in 2007. Currently, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Progress through Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall, although there is some variation between year groups. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, because their needs are identified accurately and they receive effective support. Pupils with limited knowledge of English are also supported well so that they make steady progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils feel secure and valued. They are confident, friendly and generally co-operate well. The school experienced a high level of exclusions two years ago. Pupils' behaviour has improved and there have been no exclusions this year. Pupils conduct themselves safely, coping well with the constraints of the playground. They feel that, while occasional confrontations do occur, the school manages their safety well. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory overall, and their social development is good. Pupils show good awareness of a range of faiths and traditions. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school community through the school council and taking on various posts of responsibility. Opportunities to contribute to the wider community are more limited. Pupils develop sound skills that contribute

to their future economic well-being through fund raising, running the tuck shop and initiating school clubs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good. Lessons are planned well and skilfully promote children's basic language and social skills. In Years 1 to 6, while there is a significant amount of good teaching, too many lessons are still only satisfactory, leading to inconsistencies in learning. The impact of teaching on achievement is variable because lessons occasionally lack pace and challenge. Activities can be dull and do not always provide opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to plan challenging work. While the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory, more able pupils are less well provided for. Across the school, relationships are good and teachers have effective strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. Teaching assistants play an important part in ensuring good support for pupils. Teachers indicate to pupils what they want them to learn and how to judge whether they have been successful. However, marking does not always show how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and satisfactorily enriched by visits and events. Provision for the creative arts is a strength. There is an appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. However, literacy skills could be more consistently promoted through, for example, work in subjects such as history and geography. Information and communication technology skills are taught thoroughly, although they are not used sufficiently across the curriculum. That said, the school is developing a 'virtual learning community' which allows pupils to access information from home. While several extra-curricular activities are offered, relatively few pupils participate. The impact of the good personal, social and health curriculum is evident in pupils' positive attitudes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Adults promote pupils' health, safety and welfare well. Pupils are confident that there is always an adult to support them. The school has satisfactory links with external agencies. There are effective systems for supporting pupils who need extra guidance, such as those with behavioural issues. Those with learning difficulties receive good support from the well trained teaching assistants. The impact of these interventions is closely monitored to ensure that pupils' learning needs are addressed and that support is efficiently deployed. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly. Detailed tracking systems are underpinning closer monitoring of individual progress. Pupils are gaining confidence in evaluating the quality of their work. They have group improvement targets in literacy and numeracy and mostly know these. Some marking is effectively linked to these targets and this promotes progress well but this is not yet established practice across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The interim headteacher has had an extremely positive impact. He has expanded the senior leadership team and empowered key middle managers to lead and monitor their specialist area. Roles and responsibilities are now more clearly defined. The school is tackling the need to strengthen teaching by ensuring that stronger teachers are effectively deployed so that they can support colleagues. The governing body recognises the issues facing the school and has undertaken training to enable it to monitor more effectively. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in areas such as behaviour, attendance and the development of subject action plans. Much, however, is very recent and the school has been slower to take action to raise standards. School improvement planning identifies appropriate areas for development, but action taken has still to impact fully on pupils' performance especially at Years 1 and 2. Nevertheless, recent improvements in Year 6 and the good Foundation Stage provision demonstrate that the school is going in the right direction.

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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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3

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

- 25 January 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Fairlight Primary School, Brighton BH2 3AJ Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You are very interested in meeting visitors and we really enjoyed talking to you. We could see that you are really proud of your school and that you really appreciate what the staff do for you. We were impressed by the way you care for each other and try to include everyone. We felt that Fairlight Primary is a satisfactory school. The main things that we found are these.
- You behave well in lessons and generally work hard.
- Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.
- All of the teaching is at least satisfactory and some of it is good. While you make good progress in some lessons, you need to learn at a brisk pace in all of them, so that you reach higher standards.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for well. You understand how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- The curriculum is satisfactory, and you particularly enjoy art and music.
- Those in charge of the school make sure it runs smoothly at present and know what to do to improve it still further. We are asking the school to make these changes so that it is even more effective.
- Improve standards in English and mathematics, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and make sure that those of you who are quick to learn do as well as you should.
- Make sure that the teaching is always challenging and interesting so that the pace of learning is good across the school. You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future. Yours sincerely George Logan Lead inspector

25 January 2008



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Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector