

Hassocks Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125933
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315361
Inspection date	22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Juliet Ward HMI

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	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Cumberland
Headteacher	Jeannie Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Chancellors Park Hassocks BN6 8EY
Telephone number	01273 842549
Fax number	01273 846793

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: current achievement and standards; teaching and learning; pupils' personal development and well-being; personal support and academic guidance; elements of the curriculum; and aspects of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's assessment and tracking records; observations of the school at work; and discussions with staff, the chair of the governing body and pupils. Responses to the parental questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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 the report.

Description of the school

This average sized infant school serves families from mainly the local community. Most pupils are White British and no pupil from a minority ethnic background is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. Children enter the school with attainment broadly at the level expected for their age. A new and experienced headteacher was appointed in January 2006; she was joined by a new deputy headteacher at the same time. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2007.

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 held in high regard by parents and pupils. One parent, reflecting the views of the vast majority of others, commented that this is a school 'where a caring, nurturing environment exists'. Another parent wrote 'It is a brilliant introduction to education for my children.' The success of the school is evident in the excellent progress made by pupils. From broadly average starting points in the Reception Year, they reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are consistently high by the end of Year 2.

Pupils are thriving academically and personally for very clear reasons. Leadership is excellent at all levels, providing clear direction and promoting high expectations. The school keeps its work under close review and constantly seeks to be better. Accurate identification of strengths and areas for improvement inform the well-targeted school plan for improvement. Everyone knows what is being done well, and how each can do better. For example, feedback to teachers on teaching is highly constructive. Staff give pupils very good academic and personal guidance. Marking points out the way forward and pupils are clear about what they need to do to succeed in lessons.

The climate for learning is outstanding. One parent wrote, reflecting the view of many, 'The school is very supportive of parents and children, and offers a real understanding of the individual needs of each child.' Behaviour is excellent and, because the curriculum is so motivating, pupils are focused intently on whatever they are doing. The consistency in promoting this atmosphere throughout the school is an exemplary feature of the outstanding teaching.

Scrupulous attention is given to each child's welfare and progress. All the necessary procedures are in place to safeguard pupils in a secure environment. Excellent support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as the school is quick to respond to need. In many cases, the needs of pupils who require extra help with learning are successfully addressed in a relatively short space of time. More capable pupils are very well catered for. Consequently, all groups of pupils achieve outstandingly well.

The school has had several staffing changes in the past two years, including a new headteacher and new deputy headteacher. Staff and governors embraced the changes the new senior leadership introduced as further enriching their school; the team approach to developments and initiatives is a real strength. Governance is excellent; the quality and standards committee, for example, make sure they keep a very close eye on the pupils' achievements, and use comparative data very effectively to track the school's progress against national trends. In addition, to ensure that governors are well placed to play their role in school leadership, representatives attend a joint annual review meeting with the junior school.

Pupils reach high standards in their academic and personal development because of the richness of the curriculum and the outstanding quality of teaching and care. Teachers' knowledge of key skills in literacy and numeracy is very strong so pupils make huge strides in their learning and are well set up for future success. The use of everyday assessment to plan the next steps in learning for each pupil is a significant factor contributing to high achievement. The accuracy of assessment enables the school to identify areas in need of improvement and address them effectively. For example, writing has been a key focus, and the improvement made in raising pupils' attainment in writing has been significant. Assessment systems do not yet use information on children's achievement at the end of the Foundation Stage to make predictions of realistic and challenging goals for pupils to reach at the end of Year 2.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Very strong links with other agencies ensure that what can be done for each pupil is done. In particular, the school's extremely effective links with the junior school ensure the transition across schools is seamless. The partnership with parents to strengthen their contribution to their children's learning is exceptional and much valued. For example, as part of the school's drive to improve pupils' attainment in writing, parents joined their children at a writing workshop, which many commented on as being 'inspirational'. The school makes every effort to encourage parents to bring children to school every day that it is possible to do so, and attendance is good as a result. Pupils develop a sensitive understanding of their own needs and those of others. The opportunities pupils have to shoulder responsibilities and contribute to the development of the school enable them to become well-rounded and valuable human beings. Pupils learn a lot about how to stay fit and healthy.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision for children in the Reception Year is outstanding. Children benefit from the careful balance of adult and child initiated activity so that they all make very good progress. Children's attainment on entry is broadly average but some have less well-developed social skills. The wealth of opportunities provided to develop spoken language and cooperative play mean these children rapidly catch up. Children settle very quickly because relationships are very positive. An overwhelming number of parents agree with the view of one parent that 'Reception is a warm and friendly environment with exceptional facilities, a kind, caring staff; enthusiasm abounds from children and Staff!' Working alongside the children, staff raise thought-provoking questions and encourage them to make decisions. As a result, children become resourceful and confident. Staff respond very well to children's interests and needs. The curriculum is made relevant to each child and all are to be found engrossed in their activities. Careful attention is also paid to supporting whole-school developments, for example developing boys' skills in writing. As part of this drive for improvement, there is a broad range of activities available to extend children's skills and, for example, their competence in using different size pens and pencils, crayons, paintbrushes and play dough. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are average or above in nearly all respects, and pupils are very well prepared for Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use information gathered at the end of the Foundation Stage to set challenging targets for pupils to reach at the end of Year 2.

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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	1
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	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	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

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hassocks Infant School, Hassocks, BN6 8EY

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to your school. I really enjoyed visiting some of your classes, looking at your work and talking with you. I am especially pleased some of you came to talk to me about your work, and showed me lots of it. Your school is an outstanding school with lots of really special features. All of the adults working with you care very much about you and want you to do well. Your headteacher leads and manages your school very well indeed. You make very good progress during your time at Hassocks and are ready to manage even harder work when you move to the junior school. Your teachers make lessons exciting; I was delighted to see how well you write, and read the super stories and books you make. Your behaviour is excellent, you listen very well in lessons and work hard. Your parents said how much they like the school and lots of them and lots of you told me how well you get on together and how helpful the teachers are. It was good to see how kind you are and how willingly you help each other.

I have asked the teachers to add yet another check to see how much progress you make after you leave the Reception classes. I also think some of you in Year 2 could check how well you are doing compared to the pupils in schools all over the United Kingdom!

Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the enormous number of letters and responses to the questionnaire. These helped me to understand how well the school is doing. I think your parents are doing a really good job in helping you all to eat healthily; lots of your lunch boxes have so many different choices of fruit and vegetables. Your parents are right to think Hassocks Infant School is a 'brilliant' school.

With best wishes,

Juliet Ward Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools

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