

## Northlands Wood Community Primary School

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125948
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	315366
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry Elston

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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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	270
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christopher Roe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine McNeill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 April 2004
<b>School address</b>	Beech Hill Haywards Heath RH16 3RX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01444 455653
<b>Fax number</b>	01444 414823

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average size school admits pupils from Haywards Heath and surrounding villages. Nearly all pupils come from White British families. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is increasing, although few are at an early stage of learning English. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little higher than in most schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are justified in seeing the school as a place where their children flourish, both academically and socially. One parent's comments were typical when writing, 'This is a lovely community school where every child truly matters, regardless of his or her abilities.' Parents are unanimous that the teaching is consistently good, and they are right. Teachers make lessons fun while maintaining high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. As a result, pupils work hard and behave impeccably. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards skilfully to make words, numbers and pictures pop up on the screen and these fascinate pupils.

It is no surprise, then, that pupils achieve well. They leave Reception with good all-round skills and make good progress through the school. By Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics and very high in science where pupils benefit from many exciting opportunities to plan their own experiments. In English, while standards in reading are high, those in writing are only slightly above average. Pupils write well when asked to do formal pieces of work, but some of their writing on worksheets and less structured tasks is careless and not always picked up by the teachers. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make rapid progress because the school assesses their needs well and provides effective support in class and in small groups.

Pupils say how much they relish their successes. They love school and attend regularly. They take responsibility around the school readily and members of the school council play an important role in improving the school community. The personal, social and health education curriculum gives pupils an exceptional knowledge of how to live healthy lives and stay safe. Pupils take very good care of each other, and staff are always on hand to support and guide them. All arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are monitored closely by the exceptionally well informed governing body. Pupils who have social and emotional problems benefit from very effective support that is highly valued by parents and pupils.

Pupils like the way the curriculum is planned around topics that link different subjects together. This enables them to write thrilling stories about the Second World War or 'apply for a job' in Victorian times. The curriculum includes extensive opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development so that they learn to reflect deeply on issues and think carefully about how their actions affect others. This, along with pupils' well developed reading and number skills, prepares them well for the future.

An important reason for the school's success lies in the effective leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff. This well knit team is skilled at identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses and working out how to make improvements that will raise standards. An example is in the way standards in writing have been raised this year, and while they are still not as high as they could be, they show a marked improvement on previous years. The good self-evaluation systems provide a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the leaders use them well to make improvements. However, while subject leaders provide valuable support to other staff, they do not do enough to check the impact of teaching on learning to improve the quality still further. Targets in the improvement plan, which are the right ones to move the school forward, are evaluated carefully to measure progress towards them. This explains why the school has improved considerably since the last inspection and why it is well set to do even better.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The leadership and management of the provision are effective and ensure that all adults work well as a team. The strong home-school links and well planned induction arrangement ensure that children make a smooth transition to school and settle into routines quickly. All staff are involved in making detailed assessments that provide accurate measures of children's progress. The curriculum is well organised to give children a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. The teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are fun and challenging so that children learn quickly. Teachers usually provide good balance of work to improve children's academic skills and develop their independence, but occasionally children work too long on their own. Adults provide very good care, support and guidance to ensure children's safety and well-being. Children make good progress so that, by the end of the Reception Year, they reach broadly average standards in all areas of learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers have higher expectations of all pupils' written work to raise standards in writing.
- Provide more opportunities for subject leaders to evaluate teaching and learning first hand.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Children's attainment on entry is typical of their ages and, by Year 2, standards are broadly average in mathematics and reading and above average in writing. While these standards are lower than in previous years, they represent good progress for this group of pupils. Pupils continue to flourish in Key Stage 2 and, by Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics and exceptionally high in science. This continues the steady improvement in recent years and the school is well on track to meet its challenging targets this year. In the 2007 national tests, standards in writing lagged behind those in other aspects of English and, while the gap is narrowing, this is still the case.

The good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including effective support from skilled teaching assistants, means they achieve well, particularly in their reading. More able pupils also do well and the proportion who attain the higher levels in the national tests is much higher than that found nationally.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' exceptional personal development makes an important contribution to how well they learn. One pupil remarked, 'We know only our best will do.' They enjoy school and are rarely absent. In class, pupils are eager to learn and you can hear a pin drop when the teacher is talking. Pupils have a very well developed awareness of how to stay safe and live healthily. They show impressive levels of maturity as they explore topics such as personal safety and bullying, and are never afraid to ask questions to make things clearer. Pupils develop a good awareness of their community, particularly by making improvements to their school through the school council, raising substantial funds for charities and making a point of befriending anyone who looks lonely in the playground. Pupils are very reflective. They think deeply about

those less fortunate than themselves and care passionately about the environment. They show that they are well prepared for the future by the way they work effectively in teams and work hard to improve their reading and number skills. In most classes, pupils know their personal targets, but in others they are not so clear about what they need to do to improve.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are carefully planned, taking into account the different needs and levels of ability in the class, which means that pupils learn quickly. By involving the pupils in the assessment of their own work, teachers ensure that pupils know what learning is expected and the steps they have to take towards these goals. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils, but occasionally they accept written work that is poorly presented and lacking punctuation, which helps to explain why standards in writing are not high enough.

Lessons are typically lively and fun, with exciting, challenging resources and a good range of teaching methods that keep pupils involved and interested. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to discuss things with each other as 'talking partners' and this works very well. In one lesson, for example, pupils worked effectively in pairs to evaluate a piece of writing and decide how it could be improved. Teachers use their interactive whiteboards very skilfully to motivate pupils and speed up learning, sometimes with outstanding results. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to support pupils who need extra help and make assessments of their progress. Regular assessment of pupils' progress is detailed and used well to identify areas that need improvement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is made enjoyable and meets the needs of all pupils. The creative and cultural aspects of the curriculum are real strengths and, as one parent put it, 'fire children's enthusiasm for learning'. For example, links between art, photography, information and communication technology (ICT) and storytelling have produced some excellent illustrations, poems and analysis by the pupils. The recently introduced 'steps to success' system of planning generally works well and gives pupils of different ages and abilities a clear idea of what they need to do next. In some classes, however, these steps are not made clear enough and this slows down pupils' progress. Through the school's work in personal and social education, pupils gain a thorough understanding of their own rights and responsibilities and how to live healthy, safe lives. Extra-curricular activities are wide-ranging and popular. An after-school dance class filled the school hall with determinedly fit and enthusiastic youngsters.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The exceptional care, guidance and support make the school a place where pupils feel special. The clear guidelines for behaviour mean that pupils know just what is expected of them. As one said, 'The way we are treated is firm but fair.' Teachers are thorough in their recording of pupils' academic and personal development and use the information well to support pupils whose progress is too slow. The school makes excellent use of skilled staff who provide effective support to pupils who are anxious or need someone to help them with a problem. Health and

safety and child protection procedures are thorough and are reviewed regularly to ensure pupils' well-being. As a result, the school is a secure and happy place in which pupils enjoy learning. The school does much to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, as has been recognised by a recent Healthy Schools award.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads well with a clear vision for the school's future. Her unwavering focus on standards and achievement is never at the expense of other aspects of pupils' development, which is why they leave as rounded individuals, fully prepared for the future. The headteacher is supported well by other senior staff who share her high expectations and enthusiasm. The leaders are not afraid to embrace new initiatives, and their involvement with the Global Citizenship programme, for example, has proved very successful in enhancing pupils' understanding of the world. Leaders work well as a team and use information on pupils' progress effectively to evaluate and improve the school's performance. Subject leaders are very effective at supporting colleagues with advice and training and have a thorough understanding of their subject's strengths and weaknesses. The school recognises the need for them to have more first-hand knowledge of the quality of teaching and rectify some of its inconsistencies. The school has excellent partnerships with other schools and colleges that do much to enhance provision for ICT, art and design and develop the skills of gifted and talented pupils. Governors play an important part in school improvement. They analyse data competently and undertake excellent 'evidence trails' to show how well the teaching and curriculum are helping to raise standards.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<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.

## Annex A

**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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	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

9 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northlands Primary School, Haywards Heath, RH16 3RX

Thank you for your important contributions to this inspection. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you who showed such enthusiasm for your school. We enjoyed talking to some of you who told us a lot about your school. You think yours is a good school and we agree!

What we found out about your school.

- You work hard and make good progress, especially in reading, mathematics and science, but some of you could be more careful with your writing.
- You have an outstanding knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers do a good job; they work hard to make lessons fun and help you when you find things difficult.
- You love the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- You behave really well, both in class and around the school, and enjoy taking responsibility.
- The staff and governors run the school well and know how to make improvements.
- All the adults take excellent care of you and are always there if you need help.

What we would like the school to do now.

- Help you to improve your writing still further; you can help by trying as hard as you can to do your best writing every time.
- Those in charge of subjects need to check the way teaching helps you learn to make sure your lessons are even better.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr Terry Elston Lead inspector

9 May 2008

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Mr Terry Elston  
Lead inspector