

Amberley CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125970
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315375
Inspection date	14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ferrant
Headteacher	Michelle Clifford
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2004
School address	School Road Amberley Arundel BN18 9NB
Telephone number	01798 831612
Fax number	01798 831030

Age group	4-10
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Introduction

An Additional Inspector carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

In this much smaller than average primary school most pupils are White British. A well below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly related to learning and medical needs. A very small proportion of the pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals. Although the school caters for pupils from Reception through to Year 5, currently there are no pupils in Year 5. The school entered into a collaboration agreement with another school in January 2005, under the leadership of one headteacher who shares her time equally between the schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Amberley has improved well in recent times and now provides a satisfactory level of education. Although staff and governors have successfully reviewed several areas of the school's work, they have a slightly generous view of its overall effectiveness.

After the last inspection, the school experienced difficulties, including a falling roll and threatened closure. Subsequently Amberley entered into collaboration with a successful neighbouring school. Under the new headteacher's strong steer, staff and governors have made very good use of external support, including the expertise gained from the middle schools and local clusters of schools. They have also worked very well with their partner school to share expertise, activities, resources and facilities to strengthen provision successfully and broaden pupils' experiences. One parent highlighted the positive impact of the collaboration on pupils when she wrote, 'I like the connection between the two schools. My son really enjoyed the (joint) Science Day and 'Enable Me' Day. He loved the swimming lessons last year and really enjoys seeing the children in the other school.'

The school has gained popularity, as evident from increasing numbers enrolling and the very positive responses from the parent questionnaire. Parents rightly appreciate the good pastoral care, strong family atmosphere, staff's approachability and the way in which the school prepares pupils for middle school successfully.

Children quickly settle into school. Foundation Stage provision is satisfactory and improving. Very good improvements to the school's curriculum foster creative and interesting lesson activities by linking many subjects together. This is having a positive impact on improving standards, enjoyment of learning and guiding pupils to develop good levels of health and fitness. Standards throughout the school are generally above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and they have started to make good progress in some subjects.

Teaching and pupils' learning are typically satisfactory and they are good in subjects such as English, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and design and technology. Mathematics teaching is a relatively weaker aspect and the staff are working to increase their skills and range of teaching methods. The accuracy of teacher assessments is developing and pupils are regularly set targets to work towards. Marking is regular, but provides relatively few prompts to guide pupils towards improvement. Pupils are also not sufficiently involved in assessing their own learning.

The headteachers' good leadership, combined with staff's commitment to the school and willingness to move forward, has enabled them to remedy most of its weaknesses. However, school self-evaluation routines, including use of the available data and checks on pupils' progress, are not yet probing enough to ensure the school has a full picture of pupils' year-on-year progress and a precise measure of the impact of the many improvements to provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Well established routines and links with pre-schools help children to make a smooth start to school. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress overall and they make good progress in communication, language and literacy and their personal development. The recently revised phonics programme is supporting all children to make good gains in learning to read and write.

Children also quickly gain independence, learn to work well together and develop good patterns of behaviour. Those children who need extra support or challenge in their learning are now being spotted quickly as staff have improved the way they assess childrens' attainment on entry to Reception. The facilities for outdoor learning have improved since the last inspection, but this is still relatively underused for activities that children choose themselves and that promote progress across all areas of learning. Staff forge and maintain good parental links. This facilitates regular sharing of information and parents' ability to extend children's learning at home.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics by strengthening teachers' skills and extending the range of teaching methods.
- Provide pupils with more detailed guidance about how they might improve their work and learning.
- Strengthen school self-evaluation, especially the way senior leaders keep a check on how pupils' learning, progress and standards are improving.

A small proportion of the 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

Over the past few years, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 have been above average. This represents satisfactory progress when compared to pupils' above average starting points in Year 1. Standards for the current Year 2 pupils are similar to those reached in previous years. As pupils transfer to middle school at the end of Year 5, there are no national test results or progress measures for these pupils. The school's own assessments indicate that standards at the end of Year 5 in 2007 were above expectations in English and mathematics, but no information in science was collected to inform the school about pupils' progress. Current evidence of pupils' work points to pupils making satisfactory progress overall, but they could be making quicker progress in aspects of their mathematical work. Improvements to the curriculum are helping to improve standards in some of the foundation subjects. The small number of children who have learning difficulties are making good progress towards their targets, as a result of improvements to special needs provision. There are examples of work that is of a good standard in ICT, art and design and design and technology.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved. They enjoy coming to school and find lessons interesting and fun. Pupils play well together and take good care of each other. A particular strength is the pride pupils take in their finished work which is neat and well presented. Pupils make a good contribution to decision-making and helping the school run smoothly on a daily basis and through the school council. They show concern and respect for one another. These attitudes are promoted well through a broad curriculum, good participation in extra-curricular activities, strong links with pupils in other schools and participation in the church and local and wider communities. Pupils have some opportunities to learn about cultural diversity and this is an

area the school is developing. Pupils' good work habits, social skills and basic skills mean they are well prepared for middle school when they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Some teaching is good and there is clear evidence of good learning and progress in subjects such as English, ICT, art and design and design and technology. General strengths in teaching include staff's very good relationships with pupils, their planning of tasks for different age groups within each class, classroom organisation and use of resources. Both staff and pupils make good use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Relatively weaker aspects of teaching relate to teachers' lack of confidence in teaching mathematics. This results in missed opportunities for paired pupil discussion and weaknesses in questioning, which does not always ensure that all pupils understand and contribute. Assessments are improving and now take place regularly. Marking does not provide consistent information to guide pupils towards improvements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A great deal has been done to develop a good skills-based curriculum that caters well for pupils in mixed-age classes, avoids unnecessary repetition and is flexible enough to provide challenge for the more able pupils and appropriate support for those who have learning difficulties. The revised curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well because it is very broad and enjoyable. It generally serves pupils' academic needs well because it gives good attention to all subjects, including French and some specialist sports and music. Good use of the school's excellent outdoor facilities and the local and wider communities along with themed events, clubs, visits and visitors all help to enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils now have good opportunities to apply their basic skills in English and ICT to their work in other subjects. More needs to be done to establish relevant, meaningful links between mathematics and work in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are good procedures for vetting staff and eliminating other risks to pupils' safety. Induction to school and transfer arrangements to middle-school are very good. Staff know pupils very well, provide good pastoral care and ensure they are well supervised and looked after. Staff are quick to respond when pupils, including those who are most vulnerable, need that bit of extra support. They maintain strong links with parents and external agencies in this regard. All of this ensures pupils feel safe, happy and confident in school. Although teachers regularly set learning targets for pupils, marking does not provide enough feedback to guide and challenge pupils to make even better progress, and pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although the headteacher provides good leadership and a good capacity to help the school continue to improve, as reflected in her success to date, overall leadership is satisfactory rather than good. This is because there is some way to go before all subject leaders play a strong enough role in critically monitoring and evaluating the impact of provision, so that the school can then identify very precisely what needs to be done next and translate their findings into an incisive school improvement plan.

Since Amberley entered into the partnership with another school the headteacher's clear educational direction and determination has been at the core of the school's ability to tackle weaknesses. Improvements have taken place on many fronts, resulting for example in improving standards, better teaching and a strong, well resourced curriculum. Staff have been very supportive of the changes, appreciate the new opportunities this has afforded them, and recognise how all of this has benefited the pupils. Governors are supportive, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and carry out their responsibilities as they should.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
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?	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	2
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

14 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Amberley First School, West Sussex BN18 9NB

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school. I think that your school is improving and provides a satisfactory education.

It was good to see you really enjoying school and working and playing well together. I enjoyed looking at the work in your books and on display. This showed me that you are reaching good standards and beginning to make good progress in some subjects. You try hard to keep your work neat and tidy.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are good in some subjects. The staff look after you really well and find lots of really interesting things for you to do, including taking you on visits and working with children in your partner school. They listen to your views and take notice of them. You know who to turn to if you have a problem. They ensure that you develop very good relationships and have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.

The work in your books is improving, especially your English and ICT work. I also noticed your lovely artwork on display and in sketchbooks and the good quality models you have made.

Your headteacher and the staff have already made a lot of improvements and are thinking about how they can make things even better for you. I have asked them to keep up their good work and also to help you to improve your progress in mathematics and give you more information about how you can improve your work. I have also asked them to get better at checking how well the changes they make help all of you to reach higher standards and make better progress.

You can help by working hard and continuing to take good care of each other so that your school continues to be a very happy place to be.

With very best wishes for the future.

Kathryn Taylor Lead inspector