

Patcham Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114373
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	325999
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	319
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Fitzjohn-Scott
Headteacher	Mary Chambers
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Highview Avenue South Brighton BN1 8WW
Telephone number	01273 509766
Fax number	01273 502465

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

The pupils' personal development and well-being, with a particular focus on their behaviour and the extent to which they contribute positively to the school

The quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and its impact on their achievement

The extent to which pupils are involved in assessing their own work and deciding how to improve it

The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2

Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) together with the monitoring of their progress and the leadership of the area

The effectiveness of the governing body.

Evidence was gathered from interviews with staff and pupils, lesson observations and analysis of documents including parents' and carers' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Patcham Infant School is a large school whose pupils are drawn from relatively advantaged backgrounds, and fewer than average are entitled to free school meals. The proportion that has learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that seen in most schools, although rising. The majority of pupils are White British and few speak a first language other than English. The school's EYFS provision includes a funded nursery for three-year-olds. Most of the children who attend the nursery move up to the Reception classes, where they make up about half of the numbers each year. Almost all of the other children joining the school in Reception have had formal pre-school education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Patcham Infant School provides an outstanding quality of education and care. Its calm and purposeful atmosphere gives pupils a very strong start in formal schooling and sets them up very well for the future as well-balanced young people with a great enjoyment of learning. A representative comment from a parent notes: 'Patcham Infants is a fantastic start to school life.' Pupils are very well known and cared for by staff who have high expectations of behaviour which they subtly but firmly apply. Excellent personal and social education engenders strong social skills and an understanding of right and wrong. One pupil said she especially enjoys 'learning to be kind'. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good. Pupils feel safe and have every confidence that they can rely on staff if they have any concerns.

From starting points which are in line with those expected for their ages, children make outstanding progress from the start so that, by the time they leave the Reception class, nearly all achieve the levels expected in the required areas of learning and many surpass expectations. Outstanding progress continues in Years 1 and 2 with pupils reaching very high standards in their end-of-key-stage assessments in reading, writing and mathematics and producing work of high quality in other areas of the curriculum.

Lessons and other learning activities are carefully planned and adapted to meet pupils' needs. Teachers are highly skilled at engaging pupils in learning. For example, Year 1 pupils sat in rapt attention as their teacher revealed objects from her treasure box which were related to their work on descriptive words. Tasks are varied with much practical learning and a strong focus on building pupils' independence as learners. Teachers ensure pupils understand the purpose of what they are asked to do and this both motivates pupils and enables them to think usefully about the progress they are making and what to do next. All staff are keen to praise and build pupils' self-esteem, while also offering excellent guidance for improvement through discussion and teachers' marking for older pupils. The school has worked hard to develop the use of questioning by teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) to test and extend pupils' thinking. This is often good and sometimes outstanding. The organisation of learning areas, displays and resources such as books is a notable feature of the school, helping pupils make best use of their time and enabling them to organise themselves by making it easy for them to find what they need.

The pupils make a very positive contribution to the school and its community. They help take care of the school's environment by keeping it tidy and the school council makes a real impact through the regular charity fund-raising events undertaken. Pupils have many opportunities to get involved in community activities like the Brighton festival, and there are strong links with other schools locally and with organisations such as an old people's home and a synagogue. Unusual dimensions of the school's work include links with a school in Zambia, giving pupils an excellent awareness of the global community. These activities reflect the outstanding links made with external partners to enrich pupils' experiences. They also contribute strongly to pupils' excellent spiritual and cultural development, evident for example in older pupils' ability to reflect on the reasons for charitable giving and the differences between life in the Zambian school and their own lives.

The curriculum is planned very well to make learning fun. While there is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and increasingly on using computers, other subjects are valued too. Very good use is made of visits to places of interest to enrich pupils' learning. A move last year to

increase cross-curricular work in Year 1 has made beneficial links between subjects and is being extended to Year 2. Work in subjects associated with creativity, such as art and design, drama and music is valued and was recognised in a recent Artsmark award. The school is keen to promote pupils' creative thinking further through a wider range of subjects in Years 1 and 2 to sustain their strong creative development in the EYFS. However, because the school does not have a clear definition of creativity, it is not able to plan for its development systematically or to check if the steps taken to promote it have the desired impact.

The school does a very good job in helping pupils lead healthy lives and has gained a Healthy School award. Pupils know why they need to eat healthy food and they enjoy taking exercise because these messages are embedded into many aspects of their learning, including in science and physical education. After-school clubs make a strong contribution to pupils' health and they are keen to participate in sport-related activities. Unusually for an infant school, there is a pool on site and the majority of pupils learn to swim before they leave.

Pupils' personal and academic progress is tracked carefully. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and others requiring extra help are skilfully identified. Teachers and LSAs work extremely well together and with external services such as for speech and language to support these pupils so they make outstanding progress. Small group sessions are a strong component of this work. They are often taught by LSAs and are singled out by parents as of vital benefit to their children. The school takes the innovative step of employing a counsellor to support pupils needing additional emotional guidance. Communication with parents is a strength, with most parents saying they are kept very well informed about their children's progress and welcoming the many opportunities they have to get involved. Action to ensure good attendance is effective and the school is working hard to improve it further through work with the few families who take their children for holidays in term time.

The school's leadership and management are highly effective with a very clear steer provided by the headteacher alongside strong staff teamwork and a shared vision. The very positive picture in the last inspection has been sustained and built upon. The school has high expectations for all pupils' academic and personal development. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness are excellent so that the school is alive to areas requiring improvement and takes effective action to remedy them. This is evident, for example, in the advances made in the quality of teachers' questioning in lessons, and the steps this year to improve reading further are very well considered. Relatively new duties for schools, such as contributing to community cohesion, are rapidly built into development planning and taken very seriously. Excellent professional development is at the heart of the school's success. Training is closely linked to overall school priorities and to those of individual people so that the school has very good capacity to improve further. The governing body has excellent expertise; it is very supportive but firm in holding the school to account.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The EYFS is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children. Starting points are in line with those expected for children joining both the Nursery and Reception classes. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen in recent years to include more children with communication and language difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. The children make excellent progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes. The overwhelming majority attain the levels expected of them and many exceed them by the time they join Year 1. The children feel safe and welcomed in what one parent described as 'a lovely nurturing environment'.

They learn very well how to take care of themselves and be independent, for example clearing up after their activities. The children who attend the Nursery and then move up to Reception act as good role models for those joining Reception from other nursery settings. Learning activities are very well planned to meet the children's needs. Their progress is monitored carefully, leading to prompt provision of additional support where needed. Communication with parents and carers is excellent so they know how their children are getting on and are well supported in helping them. The school has responded effectively to the increasing need for speech and language support, including through appointing a new member of staff and through staff training. There is a very good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The learning environment is very well organised to reinforce what children are learning with adults when selecting what to do for themselves and the school has worked hard in the last year to improve the range of child-initiated opportunities. There is a very good balance of indoor and outdoor activities although the school is aware that the outdoor area is less stimulating and is taking suitable steps to improve it. The EYFS leader has a very clear grasp of strengths and weaknesses in provision and makes a strong impact when improvements are needed, for example in enhancing the opportunities children have for initiating their own learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the work to develop pupils' creativity in Years 1 and 2 is clearly defined and structured, so that it can be promoted effectively and the impact on pupils' work can be monitored.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Patcham Infant School, Brighton, BN1 8WW

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited you recently, and to let you know what we found out.

- The school gives you an outstanding start in life so that you really enjoy learning and make very good progress in your work.
- We were very impressed with how well you behaved, and you told us the school encourages all of you to make good friends and try to help each other.
- You do very exciting things in lessons and you told us that this is one of the reasons why you enjoy school so much.
- The teachers are very good at helping you think about how to improve your work.
- The teachers are very kind and helpful. They keep a close eye on whether you are happy and doing well with your work. They are very good at giving you extra help when you need it.
- You try very hard to help in the school and when you have the chance to do things for people outside school, like when you raise money for charities.
- The school works very hard to help you stay fit and healthy and we think you understand very well what to eat and that exercise is important.
- The headteacher and the other staff work very well together to make the school better, for example older children now use computers more often.

I have asked the headteacher to include the following in her plans for the future:

- The school is very keen to help you think more creatively in lessons, and now needs to work out exactly how to help you do it.

Good luck for the future.

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector