

Grovelands Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114393
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326003
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2009
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	611
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	Richard Miller
Headteacher	Marion Lace
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	Dunbar Drive Hailsham BN27 3UW
Telephone number	01323 840062

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2009
Inspection number	326003

Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This is a large primary school, with three classes in each year group, including the Reception classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There is a trend of numbers on roll falling year on year, although this has now stabilised. A high proportion of pupils leaves or joins the school other than at the usual times, especially in Years 3 to 6. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average, and the majority have moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs or specific learning difficulties. The proportion of families from minority ethnic groups is steadily increasing. There is a very small proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, mainly from Eastern Europe.

There is a privately run nursery school on the school site. In addition, there is a privately managed after-school club which caters for pupils of primary age from the whole of Hailsham.

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. It has a number of outstanding features. The school has made good progress since its last inspection, especially in raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. It has outstanding capacity for further improvement. The key factor in the school's success is exceptional leadership and management. The excellent tracking of pupils' progress and the implementation of effective support strategies for those in danger of falling behind are paramount in school improvement. In addition, the introduction of individual pupil targets in literacy and numeracy has played a key roll in enabling pupils to understand how to improve their own work. Governors play a significant contribution in supporting school improvement, particularly in the way they challenge the headteacher over new initiatives. They ensure that pupils' performance is monitored by gender, ability and ethnicity.

Children start school with standards that are below expectations, especially in early communication, language and literacy skills. Through effective provision in the EYFS, children make good progress from the day they start school. Currently in the EYFS, the links between indoor and outdoor learning are not sufficiently embedded. Good progress continues from Year 1 onwards. Pupils' achievement is good and by the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Consistently good teaching and a very effective curriculum contribute successfully to good achievement. There are strengths in the teaching of letters and sounds and in key writing skills that have a positive impact on raising standards in English, particularly for more able pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning skills effectively to develop pupils' thinking skills. In lessons, although work is planned in detail for pupils' differing needs, teachers do not consistently make it explicitly clear how much pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson. As a result, pupils, especially the more able, are not challenged to maximise their potential. Pupils enjoy an impressive range of educational visits which contribute in particular to high standards in their work in history. They enjoy taking part in a very good range of clubs, for example, 80 pupils from Years 4 to 6 are in the school choir.

Pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being are underpinned by excellent care, guidance and support. Pupils enjoy school and work hard in lessons. Relationships are very good and pupils willingly engage in conversation with visitors. In Year 6, pupils make a significant contribution to the school community through roles, including house captains, peer mediators and librarians. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, including, in Year 6, the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol. The quality of pastoral care is excellent, including very effective support for those with learning difficulties and those who join the school during Years 3 to 6. Pupils have real ownership of their literacy and numeracy targets and value the way in which teachers' marking tells them how they can improve their work.

The school's involvement in the 'Hailsham Partnership' is excellent. Members of the school council speak highly of their opportunities to meet with fellow members from the other primary schools in the town. Whilst only 10% of questionnaires were returned, parents have a very high regard for the professionalism of the staff. They are pleased with the way their children settle quickly into the EYFS. As one wrote, 'The way the teachers combine the phonic learning, in the homework, has made us feel that we can also work with our child.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress and by the time they start Year 1, standards are above average in all six areas of learning. Good teaching of letters and sounds plays a key part in developing children's early reading and writing skills. Planning is good and the way in which children are taught as a year group, rather than three distinct classes, is effective. Children benefit from specialist teaching, for example in dance, as part of their physical development. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and contribute significantly to children being taught key skills in smaller groups. Children enjoy choosing activities for themselves and play happily together, for example in the 'doctor's surgery'. Children benefit from a stimulating and safe outdoor area, including a climbing frame and areas where they may 'garden'. However, as the school recognises, the outdoor area is not fully established as an area which mirrors the six areas of learning promoted indoors.

Children are cared for extremely well. Effective support is provided by staff and outside agencies for the increasing number starting school with speech and language difficulties. Partnerships are good, with staff working hard to engage parents in the children's learning. Effective links with pre-school providers in the area support the smooth transition into the Reception classes. Leadership and management are good, with particular strengths in the way in which children's progress is assessed and planning amended to meet individual needs as the result of information gathered.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teachers' expectations as to what pupils should achieve by the end of lessons.
- Embed the use of the outdoor learning area for children in the EYFS to cover all six areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In response to the good teaching they receive and through teachers setting challenging targets, pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the school. Improvements in Year 6 results have been sustained year on year. The school recognises that a small number of more able pupils in Year 6 could perform better in writing and as a result a programme to extend writing skills has been implemented. Good use is made of intervention, with a number of strategies having impact, for example, the quick progression of newcomers in Years 5 and 6 who manage to perform in line with their peers upon leaving school. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress towards the targets set for their learning. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who are relatively new to speaking English, achieve well. Although there are year-to-year variations, boys and girls maintain similar rates of progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Through art, music and 'themed weeks', for example on Africa, they gain a genuine insight into the lives of others. Pupils' attitudes to learning are first rate and they say they enjoy learning because of the relationships with the adults in school, who are always fair. The school council is proud of its

contribution to the school, for example in choosing playground equipment to make it a more exciting place at break times.

Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and take advantage of the many cultural and sporting activities the school offers. They are aware of safe practices and demonstrate this by understanding rules which keep them safe. They enjoy a secure learning environment and feel comfortable to ask questions if they are unsure about anything. Attendance is good. Pupils take pleasure in performing in the school choir, for example, taking part in singing a song in different languages, with pupils who speak Danish and Arabic being assured their languages would be included. Recent improvements to standards in literacy and numeracy mean that pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Well-planned lessons mean that pupils are helped to be well organised, confident and willing to contribute to discussions. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good as they are managed with positive behaviour management strategies, with all year groups identifying a 'star', 'hero' or 'VIP' of the week. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use interactive whiteboards effectively to demonstrate and explain new learning. The teaching of reading is of a high standard and contributes significantly to the improved standards in English. Teaching assistants are used effectively, particularly at the start of lessons, where they are fully engaged in supporting individuals or small groups.

Teachers skilfully question pupils to extend their knowledge as well as making sure all pupils fully participate in the lesson. At the start of lessons, teachers share the learning intentions and 'steps to success'. Whilst these strategies engage and motivate pupils, the 'steps to success' do not always apply to all the different groups of pupils. This means that there are times when pupils, particularly the more able, do not achieve enough in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been adapted successfully to meet the needs of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties. The emphasis is on developing pupils' skills, using humanities and science to lead the planning. The curriculum provides good support for literacy and numeracy whilst making good links between subject areas, which enhances pupils' creativity. There are very good examples of pupils using their literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their history work. Curriculum enrichment is very good and provided through an impressive range of visits and visitors coming to the school to contribute to pupils' enjoyment, learning and understanding. For example, the Year 6 topic on the Victorians leads to a Victorian day, and the study of William Morris to creating paintings in his style, with the topic concluding with a visit to Standen House. Embedded in the curriculum are the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme, which have a positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school complies rigorously with all statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils. Parents value the quality of pastoral care and the quality of the induction arrangements for their children whether starting in the EYFS or transferring from another school. Strategies to support pupils with learning difficulties and other vulnerable groups are excellent. Teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting learning. Excellent links with outside agencies and partner schools support pupils most effectively.

The quality of academic guidance and support is outstanding. Pupils know and understand their targets in literacy and numeracy. Teachers review these with pupils on a regular basis and sign them off when reached and then set new targets. Pupils say how much they value teachers' marking because it tells them how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Particularly strong are the sense of purpose, which is shared by all staff, and clear, outstanding direction, which is communicated by a headteacher who embodies high aspirations. Year and subject leaders have been empowered to make strategic decisions and have an excellent grasp of pupils' performance and the strategies with which they can support and improve learning. Self-evaluation is rigorous, honest and shared. It ensures all have ownership of the performance of the school. An experienced governing body provides excellent support for the school as well as effectively holding the leadership team to account. Equally effective is the leadership's use of external partnerships to improve the learning experiences of the school community. Of particular note is the local link with the Hailsham Partnership, which offers professional development opportunities for staff and a forum for pupils to swap ideas. The leadership team demonstrate the value they place on promoting understanding of other cultures and communities through forming a link with a school in Africa, with the latest activity of donating toothbrushes giving pupils an understanding of the meaning of charity.

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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 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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

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

22 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grovelands Community Primary School, Hailsham BN27 3UW

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you around the school and in lessons. On behalf of the team, I must give a special thank you to the school council and the group from Year 6 who met us during lunchtime. All of us would have loved to have stayed longer in your school, but whatever you do, do not tell your teachers I said that! I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school, but I think you know that already.

These are some of the things that we thought were especially good:

- The work you do in literacy and numeracy is of a good standard.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you get on really well with each other and adults.
- In lessons, you work hard and like the way teachers tell you how well you are doing in reaching your targets.
- You enjoy taking parts in clubs, including the choir and going on educational visits which help you do some brilliant work in history.
- All the adults in the school look after you and support you extremely well.
- Those who lead and manage your school do an excellent job in making sure that you work hard and become delightful young people.

There are two things which we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do in order to make your school even better than it already is. These are:

- To make sure that teachers tell you how much work you should complete by the end of the lesson.
- To make sure that those of you in Reception can learn outdoors as well as you do indoors.

Keep up the good work and carry on reaching your targets.

Yours faithfully

David Curtis

Lead inspector