

Park Mead Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 114408 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 326008 |
| Inspection date | 18 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Carole Skinner |

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 | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 101 |
| 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 | John Gross |
| Headteacher | Carolyn Mears |
| 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 | Upper Dicker Hailsham BN27 3QP |
| Telephone number | 01323 844247 |
| Fax number | 01323 844247 |

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection date | 18 March 2009 |
| Inspection number | 326008 |

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small village school draws its pupils from a wide area. Almost all of the pupils are from White British families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools. More pupils join and leave the school during the course of a year than is usually seen. The school's roll has risen from 84 to 101 over the past six months. At the time of this inspection, there were 14 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are taught in a separate Reception class. The other six year groups are taught in three mixed-age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory, but improving as responsibilities are shared more widely amongst the small staff. The headteacher is maintaining a firm focus on raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress through improvements to teaching and learning. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are similar to the national average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Progress is accelerating more quickly in Key Stage 2 in response to stronger teaching.

Careful analysis of assessment data identified that some pupils, particularly the more able, were not making sufficiently rapid progress, especially in writing and mathematics. The school has taken steps to tackle these inconsistencies and new initiatives are beginning to have a good impact. Standards are rising, but the school knows that there is still room for improvement. More rigorous systems for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress are helping teachers to plan suitably challenging work for different groups of pupils. These systems are working more effectively in Key Stage 2 than for the younger classes, where they are not yet linked to end-of-year targets. The proportion of good teaching is increasing in response to effective support and training for staff, but it is not yet consistently good throughout the school. Where weaknesses remain, these relate to lack of pace in lessons and tasks that are not planned carefully enough to build on pupils' previous learning. Day-to-day assessment, including marking, and personalised targets to guide pupils' learning, are not always used effectively to provide the challenge needed to move pupils on and accelerate their progress, especially for the more able pupils.

Teachers are beginning to take a more creative approach to planning the curriculum around topics and themes that incorporate strands of each subject. This works well in terms of engaging and motivating pupils. It does not yet develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and computer skills well enough through other subjects. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They feel safe and happy because adults care for them well and respond quickly to their concerns. The school has recently improved the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through more precise allocation of resources to meet their needs. These pupils are making satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress as a result.

Parents' views of the school are sharply divided between those who sing its praises without reservation and those who are critical of specific aspects of the way it operates. The latter group feels strongly that the school fails to communicate adequately with them and does not take sufficient account of their views and concerns. The school is taking steps to improve communication with parents but the headteacher and governors are aware that there is still some way to go to establish an effective working partnership.

The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. It is becoming steadily stronger as staff embrace new initiatives and take increasing responsibility for ensuring their pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with the skills expected for their age in most areas of learning. These are weakest in writing and calculations. Children make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average

standards by the end of Reception. Provision for children's learning is satisfactory. They experience a suitable range of activities, some led by adults and others that they initiate for themselves. These activities are carefully planned around a central theme that incorporates all areas of learning. Nevertheless, tasks do not always ensure sufficient challenge for the most able children. A more structured approach to teaching sound and letter recognition is helping to boost children's progress in reading and writing. The children's welfare is given high priority and they make good progress in developing confidence and independence, often selecting resources and choosing activities according to their own interests. The children feel safe and clearly enjoy being at school. Assessment procedures are being reviewed to increase their accuracy. The school has made significant improvements to the accommodation for Reception children since the last inspection, including the creation of an outdoor learning space. This area is developing as an extension to the classroom, but its potential is not yet fully exploited across all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good throughout the school in order to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Improve the use of assessment information, marking and individual targets to provide a greater degree of challenge for all pupils, but especially the more able.
- Develop a strong and productive partnership with parents through more effective channels of communication. 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

Standards are broadly similar to the national average. They have fluctuated in recent years from below average to above average levels in each key stage. This is partly because of the small number of pupils in each year group, but also because some pupils have not achieved as well as they should in writing and mathematics. Achievement now is satisfactory. Improved assessment procedures and careful checking of each pupil's progress from term to term are enabling teachers to tackle early signs of underachievement. At present, this approach is having more impact in Key Stage 2, where expectations of progress are higher and there is more good teaching. A whole-school focus on developing writing skills is improving the quality and content of pupils' work and their ability to write in a variety of genres. There are still gaps in some pupils' mathematical understanding, but these are now being steadily addressed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils participate with enthusiasm in the wide variety of sports activities on offer and demonstrate a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development owes much to the way these aspects are promoted through the curriculum. Activities such as countryside walks, fundraising for animal projects in the rainforest and Fairtrade Week open pupils' eyes to the wonders of creation and the plight of people in other parts of the world. Pupils' enjoyment in all aspects of school life is reflected in the school's above average attendance rates. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility for a variety of jobs and the school council represents pupils' views and makes suggestions for

improving the school. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning ensure that lessons are rarely disrupted. However, some younger pupils become restless when expected to sit still for too long and listen to the teacher. Peer mediators help pupils to settle their differences calmly and productively. Pupils' involvement in community activities beyond the school is somewhat limited. In some ways, they are prepared well for their life beyond primary school, such as in developing independence and working collaboratively, while their basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills are adequate.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are improving but do not yet consistently promote good progress in all lessons. They are currently stronger in Years 3 to 6 than in the younger classes. Throughout the school, good relationships and effective management of pupils' behaviour help to create a calm and productive working environment. Attractive displays support and celebrate learning. Where teaching is most successful, it is lively and interesting and involves pupils actively in 'hands-on' learning. Occasionally, teachers do not use the most appropriate methods and resources to enhance pupils' understanding and motivate them to learn. Consequently, progress in those lessons is slower. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of day-to-day assessments to plan tasks that match pupils' differing needs, but this is not consistent throughout the school, particularly for the more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive carefully planned support in lessons that enables them to be fully involved in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. The school is implementing the most recent national guidance in literacy and numeracy and for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers are gradually tailoring this to the pupils' needs. New strategies in teaching phonics and developing writing skills are having a beneficial impact. The school is moving away from a subject-based approach to curriculum planning towards a more creative thematic approach that incorporates the teaching of key skills across a range of subjects. This is at a relatively early stage of development. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment for pupils, including sport, music, and art. Links with other local schools enrich the provision for gifted and talented pupils and for outdoor pursuits. Residential trips develop pupils' confidence and self-reliance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has rigorous procedures for promoting pupils' health and safety and provides good levels of care. The introduction of a 'park and stride' scheme has helped to alleviate parking problems on one morning a week, but a number of parents raised concerns about the dangers of parking on the busy road outside the school. Pupils are confident that adults always take notice of their concerns and say that the school deals promptly with the rare instances of bullying. Academic guidance and support are not as strong as pastoral care. Pupils are not always given sufficiently clear guidance on how to improve their work, either through marking

or through the use of personal targets. Most can say what their targets are, but these are not reviewed often enough to ensure a sense of accomplishment. Good links with external agencies provide valuable additional support to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is well supported by staff, governors and the local authority in her drive to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress. The leadership roles of other staff are developing steadily so that they are gradually becoming more fully involved in evaluating the school's performance. Well-directed leadership in English is focused on driving up standards and its impact is already clear in the improvement in pupils' writing. Analysis of assessment data and the tracking of pupils' progress are satisfactory and improving. They are currently having more impact at Key Stage 2 than they are in the two younger classes.

The recent high turnover of governors means that many are still getting to grips with their roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development and are confident to ask challenging questions. The school is developing sound links within the local community and raises pupils' awareness of different cultures and religions through the curriculum and it is developing a link with Ethiopia. It has rightly identified a need to seek ways to develop pupils' understanding of cultural diversity within the UK.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

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? | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

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? | 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

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 | 3 |
| 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 eliminated | 3 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 |

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

19 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Park Mead Primary School, Hailsham BN27 3QP

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We were pleased to see that you behave well in lessons and work hard. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe because the adults look after you well.

Here are some of the things we found out during our visit:

- Your school gives you a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress and reach standards similar to those of pupils in many other schools. Many of you could do even better, especially those of you who are capable of reaching high standards.
- The school helps you to become confident, independent young people and gives you good opportunities to learn about the world around you.
- You take part in a good range of sports activities and know how to keep fit and healthy.
- You make good progress in lessons when the teachers plan activities that really interest you and keep you actively involved.
- The teachers check your progress carefully from term to term so that they can spot if any of you are falling behind and give you extra help.
- The adults who run the school are steadily making improvements because they want Park Mead to be a good school.

We have asked the school to do three things:

- Make sure that all your lessons are of good quality so that you can all make good progress and reach higher standards.
- Give you clear guidance on how to improve your work and reach your targets, especially those of you who are capable of reaching high standards.
- Work more closely with your families so that they know exactly what is happening in school and feel more involved in your learning.

You can help by continuing to work hard and using your targets to help you do even better.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector