

Rocks Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114471
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326017
Inspection date	21 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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)	189
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	Maxine White
Headteacher	Chris Davey
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lashbrooks Road Uckfield TN22 2AY
Telephone number	01825 762827
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of the school's recent initiatives to raise standards and pupils' achievement
- the effectiveness of the school's provision, especially the curriculum, in promoting pupils' personal and academic development
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in driving forward school improvement.

Evidence was gathered from: visits to lessons; a scrutiny of pupils' work; discussions with pupils, staff and two governors, including the vice chair of the governing body; the views of parents; and a scrutiny of the school's documentation. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Rocks Park is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with the remainder coming from several other ethnic heritages. Some year groups have far more boys than girls. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, this varies considerably across the year groups. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free schools meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rocks Park Primary is a good school. It is an improving school and several aspects of its work are outstanding. The extremely positive and inclusive ethos, evident in its day-to-day practice, is a clear reflection of the school's motto of 'Only our best is good enough'. A vibrant curriculum and the outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive help to develop them into exceptionally mature and confident young people, well prepared for the next stage of their education. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact it is having on their children's academic and personal development. Typical comments from parents include, 'Fantastic school', 'Warm, friendly nurturing environment', 'My child is making excellent progress', and 'Excellent leadership'. The school's relationships with parents and carers are excellent. This was evident from the large numbers that attended the 'open afternoon' during the inspection to work with their children on problem-solving activities, which was the school's theme that week.

Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. Other than in 2008 when the school's national test results were broadly average, this continues the pattern of the past few years. The reasons for the dip have been carefully analysed and the school's subsequent actions this year mean that it has been reversed. The school's tracking information shows that the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 is set to rise considerably this year. Children are making good progress in Reception in all areas of learning. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2, which represents satisfactory progress from current pupils' average starting points in Year 1. Their progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 because of the strengths of the teaching in this stage and overall achievement is good. Decisive action has been taken to improve pupils' performance in mathematics, which has been a relatively weaker element, especially for the most able pupils. However, the additional challenge provided for the more able pupils in mathematics is not always found in other lessons, especially for the younger pupils.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners who take great pride and care in their work. This is particularly evident in the high quality presentation of work undertaken during their 'learning journeys' and other activities. They thoroughly enjoy school, reflected in their above average attendance and high levels of participation in the wealth of activities provided by the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Their personal and social skills are extremely well developed. Pupils are courteous and friendly and show considerable respect for each other and towards adults. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils feel extremely safe and they are confident that there is always a trusted adult they can turn to if they have concerns. They have an excellent understanding of the need to eat healthily and to maintain an active lifestyle. The school council represents the pupils' voice effectively. Its members take their responsibilities seriously and have contributed to improvements to the school's facilities. One interesting development is the production of a 'children's self-evaluation form', which provides a clearly articulated view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Older pupils support the younger ones in the playground and at lunchtimes. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community, raising funds for several national and global charities. Pupils are prepared well for the future because they apply their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in a variety of interesting and relevant contexts and develop good team-working and problem-solving skills.

Effective teaching ensures that pupils make good gains in their learning, although not consistently in all classes across the school. Teachers plan their lessons well and provide pupils with a varied range of activities to help them learn. The extremely good relationships that staff foster with pupils mean that lessons are conducted in a positive and supportive atmosphere. Classroom routines are established well and teachers' expectations are high. As a result, lessons are productive, as pupils maintain their interest and focus. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive first-rate support, which enables them to make good progress. The more able pupils, especially the older pupils, often receive additional extension work to challenge them further. This is not always the case with some of the younger pupils, who are also given some rather undemanding worksheets to complete, which stifles more active, first-hand learning. This means that, at times, the more able pupils in particular make satisfactory progress, rather than the good progress that other pupils make.

The outstanding curriculum includes a wide range of activities, visitors and visits, including residential stays, which promote pupils' good progress and contribute extremely well to their personal development. Provision for English, mathematics and science is good and pupils' skills in these subjects, as well as their ICT skills, are applied effectively in other subjects. The excellent links between different subjects add relevance and meaning to pupils' learning. For example, the cross-curricular programme of 'learning journeys' and regular whole-school themed events, such as 'problem solving', 'learning to learn', 'save our earth', and 'signs and symbols', fire the pupils' enthusiasm and result in work of very high quality. Art is a real strength of the curriculum, seen in pupils' excellent artwork. A visiting artist contributes well to this success. Class displays celebrate pupils' work well and reflect the breadth of the curriculum. Pupils appreciate the extensive range of additional activities offered and they have good opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument. The attractive grounds are used well to support pupils' creative, physical and scientific development.

Pupils' excellent personal development is enhanced by the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. Procedures to ensure that pupils are protected and secure are highly effective. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils identified as vulnerable receive well-targeted support. The school's links with outside agencies are excellent. Academic guidance is good. Effective systems assess and track pupils' progress and attainment regularly. Pupils know what they need to do to improve in literacy and numeracy. They have many opportunities to reflect on their learning, either using 'post-it' notes for the younger pupils or 'reflection books' for the older pupils. Their skills in self-assessment and review are developing extremely well. Good developmental and encouraging marking helps pupils to improve their work.

The headteacher's excellent leadership, together with the effective support of his deputy, provides particularly clear educational direction to the school's work. This has ensured a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills but within the context of an extremely broad and creative curriculum that develops pupils' wider skills to equip them well for the future. Staff work together effectively and there is a shared endeavour in doing the very best for all the pupils so that they all benefit from the school's provision. Senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate, although occasionally it underestimates some of its undoubted strengths. Procedures for checking all aspects of the school's work, including pupils' progress, are robust and systematic so areas for improvement can be tackled swiftly. The actions taken so far indicate that the school's capacity to improve further is good. The school knows its own community and that of the local area well, and the curriculum ensures that pupils have a good

understanding of the wider United Kingdom and global communities, for example through a project on Malawi and a visit from a choir from Kenya. The governing body works effectively to fulfil its statutory duties, knows the school well, and provides good levels of support and challenge.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Much emphasis has been placed on improving the quality of provision in Reception and this is paying dividends in children's faster progress. Most year groups enter the school with knowledge and skills broadly as expected for their age. Good teaching, careful attention to children's welfare and an interesting range of learning activities enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Their creative development, though, is not quite as strong as other areas of learning. Standards are above average by the end of Reception and children achieve well. Children make good gains in their personal and social development because of the positive relationships established between adults and children. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning and participate well in the activities provided. They form good relationships with each other and behave well. Staff work well together and provide an effective blend of activities led by adults and allowing children to explore, be creative and work independently. Good attention is given to language, literacy and numeracy. Children learn through interesting topics and themes such as 'growth and life cycles' and their progress is checked carefully. Outdoor learning activities have improved but not enough has been done to extend these further and link them more closely to each topic. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well and the improvements made to this area recently have been effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons provide sufficient challenge to stretch the more able pupils, especially the younger ones.
- Extend the outdoor learning opportunities for children in Reception and link these more effectively to the topics being covered.

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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	2

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	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 learners' needs?	2
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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rocks Park Primary School, Uckfield TN22 2AY

Thank you for welcoming us to your school the other day. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. Like you, we were very excited to see your model racing cars race against each other in your problem-solving activities, and wished we could have taken part! You helped us to find out so much about your school. This letter is to tell you what we found.

- You receive a good standard of education at Rocks Park.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start to their time in school.
- The good teaching is helping most of you to make good progress so that standards are above average by the time you leave in Year 6.
- You clearly enjoy school. You told us that you felt safe and that you could turn to an adult in the school if you had any worries.
- You are friendly and polite to one another and to adults, and your behaviour is excellent. You are growing up to be mature and responsible young people.
- You have a very good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and the school council is good at helping the school to get better.
- The school provides you with really interesting topics and activities to do to help you learn, which you clearly enjoy, and arranges trips, visits and a large number of clubs so you can develop new skills.
- Staff look after you extremely well and make sure that you receive the right kind of help. They check your progress regularly.
- The headteacher, staff and governors know what needs to be done to make the school even better and are working hard to do so.

We have asked the school to do two things to help the school get even better.

- Make sure that the work in all lessons, especially for the younger pupils, stretches everyone as much as possible, particularly for those of you who find learning easy.
- Make sure that the outdoor activities for children in Reception link more closely to their topics.

You can help by continuing to do your very best and helping one another as you do now. We wish you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Joan Greenfield

Lead inspector