

Sedlescombe CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114522
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326028
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	Voluntary controlled
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	26
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Maidment
Headteacher	Marian Ham
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brede Lane Sedlescombe Battle TN33 0RQ
Telephone number	01424 870585
Fax number	01424 870585

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Inspection number	326028

© Crown copyright 2008

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 is a smaller than average school which has an increasing number of pupils attending. Pupils enter the school with skills and experiences that are broadly typical for their age. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provides for four- and five-year-old children, taught in the Reception class. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There is a small minority of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or at the earlier stage of learning English. The school has awards reflecting its commitment to healthy lifestyles.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sedlescombe is a satisfactory school. It has some good aspects, not least in the way it promotes a caring family ethos. The majority of parents are enthusiastic about the school's focus on developing the skills of every child within the school community and point to the school being 'more like a family than a school' and that it is 'easy to approach the staff'.

Children acquire a secure start in the EYFS and make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. Over recent years, the proportion of children reaching average standards when they start Year 1 has increased. In national tests, results for pupils in Years 2 were below average in past years, particularly for writing and Year 6 were below average in English last year. This was partly due to the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but also to the school being slow to spot those lagging behind in their learning. Current classwork paints a more positive picture and pupils are now on track to reach broadly average standards when they leave in Year 6. Pupils' writing skills have improved significantly, but their problem solving skills in mathematics and science do not develop well enough. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve satisfactorily given their starting points.

Pupils' comments about the school are generally very positive. Clear expectations and routines ensure their good personal development. Pupils behave well around school, making good use of the wide-ranging outside equipment such as the sports pitch and 'quiet' garden. The curriculum is satisfactory rather than good, despite efforts to introduce a more creative curriculum. In practice, some activities are not planned well enough to stretch the more able pupils or to enable all pupils to engage fully with problem solving activities. Teachers are good at promoting positive relationships and work attitudes, but not all are successful at setting work that stretches the more able pupils or in helping pupils set simple targets which help guide their learning.

Pupils and parents say they value the day-to-day pastoral care and support provided by the school, although pupils' academic guidance is not developed well enough. Although a very small number of parents raised concerns about recent changes to class organisation, many others praised the school generally. Pupils confirm that they feel safe, helped by 'playground buddies' and the high profile given for their pastoral care. The headteacher, staff and governors have a renewed focus on raising the levels of pupils' attainment and progress, but the pace of improvement is picking up only recently and has some way to go. Monitoring to gauge what further steps will raise the quality of teaching or pupils' learning further has not been sufficiently rigorous. The school's more recent improvement, particularly in raising writing standards, reflects a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The leadership of this age group is satisfactory. Children make at least satisfactory progress in all aspects of the EYFS curriculum. Good pastoral care ensures that children have a smooth start. This is aided by the good links with parents and children, which makes sure that their welfare needs are well met. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is good. Most children learn the benefits of taking turns and sharing, and many, but not all, work well independently on their activities. Some children, particularly boys, do not always stay focused on their activities. Children enjoy working together and readily respond to adults. Children are

guided well in small groups, although when children work independently, adults do not always pick up on those needing extra help or guidance to accelerate their learning. Children develop good basic communication skills, such as matching letters to sounds. They are beginning to learn simple skills to help them read and write. There is a strong commitment to outdoor physical activities, despite the outside area being quite small, which limits the scope of the activities that can take place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more opportunities for pupils in Years 1 to 6 to apply their skills in solving mathematical and scientific problems.
- Improve the monitoring of the school's and pupils' work to focus sharply on those areas which will improve teaching and the curriculum more quickly.
- Improve the quality of academic guidance, particularly in using simple targets to help pupils direct efforts to shape and improve their learning.

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

Based upon their current work, pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. They make a sound start in the Reception class. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils are on track to reach broadly average standards. Their progress is sometimes hindered in Years 1 to 6 by a lack of challenge in the teaching of problem solving in mathematics and science. This is particularly so for the more able pupils. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their classmates as activities are well matched to their abilities. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in information and communication technology (ICT), and work displayed and seen in books indicates they reach the expected levels in other subjects. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language keep up with classmates and are supported appropriately. The school, having fallen short of some of its recent academic targets, is now more closely on track to reach them next year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good, it is not surprising that they behave well, enjoy attending and have positive attitudes to school life. They show a good awareness of how to keep healthy, readily taking advantage of the outside sports pitch and climbing equipment. They join in with the regular 'brain gym' and 'peer massage' activities with enthusiasm. Many pupils attend extra-curricular clubs to extend their activity levels. Pupils regularly take part in local and more distant visits. Close links with the local village community and the local church mean that the school is fully involved in village activities. Pupils are proud of their close links with a school in India and more locally with another in outer London, which broaden pupils' awareness of others effectively and contribute to the school's desire for community cohesion. They have a clear awareness of how to keep safe and know and understand the school rules. Their good levels of behaviour and cooperative skills help prepare them for their next stage of education, although their current levels of basic skills means this aspect is satisfactory rather than good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils throughout the school benefit from teaching that fosters good relationships so they work together willingly. However, there is not enough teaching that really stretches pupils' thinking, particularly for those who are more able. Problem solving in mathematics or science activities is also a weaker aspect of planning. An increasing amount of more stimulating and exciting activities known as 'wow' work is steadily helping to motivate pupils and improve learning, particularly for the boys. Although staff use audio-visual interactive whiteboards well to make lesson introductions more appealing, the main thrust of lessons is often slow in pace and teachers' explanations are sometimes too long. This causes some pupils to lose interest and become restless. There are some high points, however, and more lively lessons based upon recent trips and topics on space are proving popular. Teachers generally mark work regularly, although it rarely refers to the pupils' success in meeting the aims of the lessons. Checks to see if they have improved on previous work are not always apparent, which reduces the benefits of feedback.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills, but there are weaknesses in the way problem solving activities are planned into day-to-day work. Recent efforts to create a more 'creative' curriculum are taking shape, but these are at comparatively early stage, making the curriculum satisfactory rather than good. Further changes are due to start next term. Pupils' experiences of ICT have improved as a result of having a purpose-built computer suite, and displays reflect the broad nature of the curriculum. A good emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development helps them to recognise differences between cultures and countries. A close link with schools in India and outer London broadens pupils' awareness of others effectively and contributes to the school's desire for community cohesion. The number of music and sports clubs, combined with trips away from school such as to the science museum and Bodiam Castle help broaden pupils' horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils with pastoral or family difficulties feel supported because the school is seen to 'go the extra mile' to help them. Children make a smooth start, as there are good links with parents to aid the first day at school. There are clear arrangements to help older pupils make a secure start to their secondary education. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make increasing progress. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are clear and effective, and pupils are confident they can turn to any member of staff for help. While pastoral aspects are good, pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory rather than good because teachers do not regularly or consistently set academic targets for pupils. As a result, not all pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve, and older pupils do not have a clear idea about how they can reach the next level in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leaders recognise the need for quicker improvement following recent disruption caused by staff changes, building work and the headteacher taking time out from school to help with Local Authority initiatives. The senior leaders and staff are now focused on raising standards in the school. The improvements in writing since the beginning of September are as a result of clear direction and strong leadership by the headteacher and concerted efforts of staff. One of the strengths of the school is its success in promoting community cohesion between pupils and families with differing backgrounds and beliefs. This helps create the family ethos recognised by pupils and parents who particularly comment about how the headteacher promotes this aspect of school. However, the monitoring of the school's work, particularly that focused on teaching, is not always effective in pinpointing clearly and directly what will improve pupils' learning best. This reduces the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation and in some areas it is not always realistic. Governors ensure the school runs smoothly and support senior leaders. Their routines to gather more information and gauge the progress of initiatives are new and it is too early to measure how effective they will be. However, governors are keen to seek improvement, and the management of building work is an area they have overseen well.

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

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sedlescombe CE Primary School, Sedlescombe TN33 0RQ

We liked visiting your school recently. Thank you for chatting to us so openly about what you thought. Yours is a satisfactory school that is trying to be even better. Here are some of the things that we thought were particularly good.

- You make the expected progress in your work and reach average standards in your work by the time you leave, but your problem-solving skills in maths and science could still improve.
- You all really enjoy being at the school as it has a good family atmosphere. You help make it a very happy place to be.
- Children in the Reception class have a smooth start to school and like their outside area.
- You said you feel safe and all the adults are good at helping you with your worries.
- You have a good understanding about how to keep fit and why eating certain foods is good for you.
- Most of you behave well in class, in the playground and during assembly. (You sing really well, especially with actions.)
- Teachers try to make lessons exciting, although some of you could be pushed just a bit more in your learning.
- Your headteacher and governors lead the school satisfactorily, but know what needs to be done to make it even better.

There are three things we have asked the school to do to help improve it some more.

-
- Give you more opportunities to use your skills to solve mathematical and scientific problems.
- Keep a closer eye on what will help you make even better progress in lessons and in your work.
- Help make sure that teachers really stretch your thinking and help you start using simple targets to help improve your learning.

You can help too by trying your best in every lesson.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector