

St Margaret's CofE Primary School, Rottingdean

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114537
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	326033
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	201
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	Lindsey Delow
Headteacher	Sandy Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Whiteway Lane Rottingdean Brighton BN2 7HB
Telephone number	01273 303109

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
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Fax number

01273 390114

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils come to the school from a wide area around Rottingdean. Most pupils are of White British heritage and have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class.

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 ensures that pupils make good progress and cares for them well. Indeed, pastoral care is a particular strength. As one parent wrote, 'There is a wonderful family feel about the school, where all ages interact and help each other.' Another commented that 'The care and support of the school has been exceptional.' This strong attention to pupils' welfare helps all pupils to gain confidence and independence, resulting in good personal development and well-being. Pupils are happy and develop positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy all aspects of their school lives. 'There's nothing not to like about this school!' exclaimed a Year 5 girl.

Teaching is good. Pupils of all abilities are well supported academically and make good progress from the start of their Reception Year to the end of Year 6. They reach above average standards and meet most of their challenging targets. There is some good marking that helps pupils to improve their work and some pupils know their individual learning targets well, but this is not consistent through the school. Pupils of all ages enjoy their lessons and feel that they work hard. Parents and pupils alike appreciate the many enjoyable activities on offer. As one older pupil put it, 'Teachers make lessons fun and educational at the same time.'

The curriculum is varied and motivating. It is enriched by a good range of specialist teaching, sports endeavours, themed weeks, visits and additional activities, such as the exciting Second World War day, complete with a range of 1940s activities, enjoyed by Year 6 pupils during the inspection. This experience gave pupils a good understanding of the lives of children in wartime, including the difficulties they faced.

Pupils have a strong voice in the school and they enjoy being involved in many aspects of school improvement. As a Year 6 pupil proudly said, 'The headteacher comes to see us in our classrooms and asks our opinions about things.' Behaviour is good overall and sometimes exemplary. Pupils thoroughly enjoy taking on responsibilities around the school, such as those of 'Bullybusters', though they say they are often frustrated that there are no bullies to 'bust'!

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and leadership team. A minority of parents expressed concerns regarding some aspects of leadership style. The headteacher has had to inform parents of a number of difficult situations in the past two or three years. These situations resulted in some tough decisions, made by the governing body and implemented by the school. The dedicated headteacher and her hard-working team have skilfully balanced and addressed all these difficulties and continued to lead the school forwards, making good improvements since the last inspection. Parents' concerns were fully considered and investigated by inspectors, who are satisfied that leaders have dealt with difficult issues appropriately.

As their responses show, most parents are supportive of the school and the good quality of education it provides for their children. Many echo the comments: 'All the people working at this school are absolute stars!' and 'We could not ask for a better school.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Reception class is good and much improved this year. There are some outstanding features. Good teaching helps children to make good progress so that they achieve well. 'My child is so inspired to learn,' commented a reception parent. Excellent planning ensures that children enjoy an exciting variety of learning activities across all areas of learning.

The classroom is lively and inviting with a great deal of children's written and creative work on display. The safe and secure outside area is very well resourced and offers a wide range of learning opportunities.

Excellent relationships ensure that all children settle in straight away and quickly gain confidence. They are outstandingly well cared for, with the result that their personal development and well-being are excellent. Children are encouraged to gain independent learning skills and thrive in this happy atmosphere. Good leadership ensures strong staff teamwork and parents are welcomed and encouraged to support their children's learning. Parents clearly appreciate the good start this school gives their children. As one parent said, 'My daughter has thoroughly enjoyed her first year at school, feels safe and well cared for and is learning a tremendous amount.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in individual target setting and teachers' marking to help pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with attainment broadly in line with expectations for their age group. Standards are higher now at the end of Reception than in the past. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. By the time pupils are ready to leave at the end of Year 6, they reach standards above average overall and well above average in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The majority of more-able pupils are appropriately challenged and achieve well. There has been a focus on raising the standards of younger pupils, following the last inspection, particularly in writing. As a result of the school's hard work, there has been considerable improvement in the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Standards at the end of Year 2 have risen since the last inspection. A well-above average proportion of Year 2 pupils attained higher levels in their writing assessments this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their strong relationships, good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Through concerted efforts by the school, attendance rates have risen and are now only marginally below the national average. However, too many parents still take their children on holidays during term-time. Pupils state confidently that bullying is not a problem. Good gains in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enable pupils to appreciate the achievements and needs of others. Pupils contribute well to the school and local communities, for example, singing at a home for the elderly. Pupils are eager to raise money for a variety of charities. As one pupil remarked, 'It helps us to remember just how fortunate we are.'

The active school council meets regularly and issues a newsletter explaining their discussions and what decisions they have taken to help improve the school. The School Congress is a good forum for pupils and adults in the school jointly to discuss and resolve issues democratically. Such activities, together with good acquisition of basic and collaborative skills, prepare pupils well for their future lives. Pupils are clear about how to keep safe. The Healthy School award

gained by the school demonstrates pupils' commitment to leading healthy lifestyles. They enthusiastically grow vegetables in the school gardens and enjoy the benefits of their strong sports provision.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and stimulating learning activities motivate pupils well and help them to make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are generally well paced. The variety of approach engages pupils and they enjoy their learning. One parent commented: 'My son is being inspired and stretched. He is so enthusiastic about his learning.' The more-able pupils are usually well challenged and make good progress. However, although good planning shows how work is to be matched to the needs of the most able, occasionally this is not fully put into practice. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they gain a good sense of achievement in their work. Assessment is well used to track progress and inform teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum is enhanced by a stimulating variety of visits, visitors and out-of-class activities. Themed days and weeks offer popular learning opportunities. As one Year 6 pupil explained, 'We have fun days and weeks to learn about things.' Pupils of all ages benefit from excellent specialist teaching in French and music. Pupils' enthusiastic involvement in the arts and sports is evidence of the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards gained by the school. Strategies put in place to improve pupils' writing skills have been successful. The school is now working hard to bring mathematics up to the standards of reading and writing. Information and communication technology and writing are well used across the curriculum. The school is in the process of remodelling its good support for those who find learning difficult and has plans in place for improving the provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'The school has a very impressive ethos of support and nurturing,' commented a parent. Indeed, pastoral care and support are distinctive features of this school. Adults and pupils alike care for each other well and there are very good links with outside professionals to ensure good support for vulnerable pupils and their families. There are good arrangements to help new children settle in when they start school in Reception, or join it at a later time. A staged transition process gives good support to pupils as they prepare for transfer to secondary school. Academic guidance is often good, but there are variations in its quality. Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating their own performance. They have learning targets on display, but not all are able to remember what they are. Some teachers mark pupils' books well with useful suggestions for how to improve their work, but this is not consistent in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

'The management team are capable and strong,' wrote a parent. The conscientious headteacher works very hard and is well supported by an energetic leadership team. Together they have made good use of monitoring and tracking data to evaluate the school's strengths and have correctly identified areas for further development. Leaders set suitably challenging targets to continue raising standards. At all levels they set clear direction to move the school forward. Indeed, there have been many improvements since the last inspection, especially the good rise in standards of younger pupils, and particularly in writing. Such successes demonstrate the school's good capacity to make further improvements.

There have been some long-term absences amongst staff as well as some stringent budget cuts, all of which have required considerable work in order to minimise any disruption caused. The headteacher and leadership team have dealt with these issues very ably. There is good equality of opportunities throughout the school and good community cohesion. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in the school and their activities in the local community. The school has a link with a school in the Dominican Republic, with pupils corresponding about their lifestyles. One older pupil showed her awareness of how different the children's experiences are in Africa: 'They wrote about their families... and that they only get a bowl of rice and some tea each day.' The school has recently had a themed week to raise awareness of diversity across the United Kingdom and this dimension is developing gradually. Governors undertake their monitoring roles very well and provide good support and challenge in holding the school to account.

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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?	2
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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?	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	3
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	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?	2

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	2
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	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	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**

26 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Margaret's C of E Primary School, Rottingdean, BN2 7HB

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel very welcome indeed. We very much enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a good school. It helps you to do good work and cares for you well.

- These are the things that are especially good about your school.
- You make good progress and achieve high standards in your work. Well done!
- You enjoy coming to school and your behaviour is good.
- Everybody in the school looks after you well and you enjoy taking responsibilities and helping each other.
- You have a good understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe.
- Your teachers work hard to make your lessons exciting and fun.
- Your school gives you many enjoyable opportunities to take part in extra activities to extend your learning, especially in French, music and sports.
- You thoroughly enjoy and learn a lot from the themed days and weeks.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors lead the school well.
- There have been lots of improvements in your school since the last inspection.
- Children in the Reception class have a good start to their school lives. The outstanding care and welfare arrangements provide them with excellent personal development and well-being.

This is what we think your school could do even better.

- When they mark your books, teachers could make sure they all give you useful suggestions about what you could do to improve your work. You could help by making sure you know your own learning targets.

You can also help the school by continuing to work hard and enjoy your lessons. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future learning. Keep up the good work!

Yours faithfully

Jacquie Buttriss

Lead inspector