

Sussex Road Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118286
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326799
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Marshall

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)	375
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	Emma Rafter
Headteacher	Nigel Amos
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sussex Road Tonbridge TN9 2TP
Telephone number	01732 352367

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The main additional learning needs are speech and language, behavioural, and emotional and social as well as individual specific needs. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at times other than expected is average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two classes of Reception children. The school has gained a number of external awards recognising its commitment to the arts, promoting healthy lifestyles and learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Its strengths lie in its strong commitment to pupils' pastoral care and personal development. Pastoral care is strong because everyone in the school works hard to make sure each child feels valued, secure, confident and ready to learn. This is a key feature in the pupils' positive attitudes to learning that, together with their good behaviour, is reflected in their good personal development. Underpinning this is the school's approach to 'Values Education'. Parents, staff and pupils all talk with enthusiasm and pride for the scheme which is key to nurturing pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The vast majority of parents agree, saying 'The "value of the month" scheme is really successful.'

From starting points that are below typical expectations, children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well. Previous underachievement for some groups of pupils, including the most able and those with specific learning difficulties, has been tackled. As a result, throughout the rest of the school, pupils now achieve satisfactorily. This is because teaching is satisfactory. The school is working to raise the quality of teaching to the level of the best, although inconsistencies remain and pupils' progress is better in some lessons and classes than others so they do not build consistently well on their good start. There has been an upward trend in standards for pupils in recent years. This is less marked in writing than in other areas, such as reading, which has been a previous focus. The school has rightly identified writing as an area for development. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are average. In 2008, whilst standards remained average, fewer pupils reached the higher levels, particularly in writing. This is being addressed and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is set to rise in 2009. Pupils in the current Year 6 are making satisfactory and sometimes better progress, and pupils are on track to achieve average standards.

All teachers regularly check how well pupils are doing, but not all make accurate enough use of this information to plan work to challenge pupils to achieve well, especially in writing. There have been some improvements in teachers' marking since the last inspection. However, marking does not refer consistently enough to pupils' targets and the next steps in their learning in order to raise standards further and secure good progress. This prevents achievement from being any better than adequate. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets pupils' needs. Whilst actions taken to raise standards and remedy recent underachievement are proving successful, writing remains a relative weakness in the curriculum.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team has worked well since its formation to bring more rigour and focus to its role. They carry out checks on a regular basis to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although these systems are too new to have secured consistently good teaching and ensure pupils achieve well in all their learning, they are used successfully to help leaders know where to focus their efforts to bring about improvement. Consequently, school leaders have already made changes to address the relative weaknesses in writing and the achievement of all groups of pupils. Although there have been improvements, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory rather than good, given the recent nature of many of the systems that have been put in place to bring about more rapid change.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception classes with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age in most areas of learning. By the end of the Reception Year most children have made good progress and have reached an average level of development, although few have reached the higher levels, especially in writing and calculating, which remain below average. The building project, whilst planning to provide a much improved space, has temporarily had a negative impact on both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. It has played a significant part in slowing children's personal, social, emotional and physical development, despite the efforts of the staff. They have already made some refinements to their practice to balance this but are aware of the need to do even more until the purpose-built area is completed. Children settle very quickly because the Early Years team has good links with the local pre-school settings and communicates very closely with parents. The children learn well because they are soon at ease with the adults and thoroughly enjoy the interesting, well-planned activities. These are well balanced, with good opportunities to make independent choices as well as being guided appropriately by adults. The Early Years Foundation Stage is managed well and checks on how well new strategies and ideas are doing are carried out with increasing rigour. Each child's progress is closely watched from the start, so the school can gauge how well children are doing. Pupils are safe and secure because staff look after each individual child's needs well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure assessment information is used effectively by all teachers to provide appropriate opportunities for all pupils, and especially the most able, to develop and apply their writing skills.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that lessons always challenge and engage all pupils well.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking so pupils understand what to do next to improve their work.

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

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that, by the end of the Reception year, last year they reached levels broadly average for children of this age, though with few children reaching the higher levels. Nevertheless, from Year 1 to Year 6, the school has not been consistently capitalising on the good start pupils get. Progress has been patchy and as a result is satisfactory at best. Pupils' achievement is weakest in writing. This is currently being tackled by the school through the more careful use of assessment information to keep a check on pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are now on track to make the expected progress from their starting points, including groups such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the gifted and talented and those at the early stages of learning English. The school's own checks show that standards in Year 6 in 2008 were average. This represented satisfactory progress for this group of pupils, although again, few pupils reached the higher levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils form valuable relationships with friends and grown-ups. They develop a good understanding of right and wrong and of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Such values and attitudes that begin in the early years set the pattern for the rest of their time at Sussex Road and beyond. Pupils respond increasingly well to their responsibilities and helping one another. Pupils make an effective contribution to school life, for example through the school council. They raise important questions and put forward ideas for improvement, such as improving their behaviour through the work they have done around bullying. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the 'value of the month' scheme is a key factor in their good behaviour and positive relationships. They have a good understanding of the importance of leading and maintaining a healthy and safe lifestyle. An appropriate foundation for pupils' future economic well-being is provided by ensuring satisfactory achievement in basic skills. However, their ability to work together in teams and develop an understanding of the world of work through the mini-enterprise initiatives has been very successful. Whilst for a very few families attendance and persistent absence remain a problem, this has improved recently and attendance is satisfactory. This is because the great majority of pupils are keen to come to school and the school has worked hard with pupils and families.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The varied progress of pupils is closely linked to the quality of teaching, which varies between classes and subjects. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. However, some lessons do not always engage and motivate all pupils or involve them actively in learning. The result is that pace drops, pupils become restless and progress slows. Teachers are becoming increasingly effective in using assessment information to group pupils and plan work. However, this does not happen in all lessons. This means that work is not always adapted closely enough to all pupils' capabilities to enable them to achieve well, particularly in writing. In groups and on a one-to-one basis, teaching assistants appropriately support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make similar progress to others. Marking is inconsistent and teachers' comments do not always make clear to pupils how their work can be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Across the school, assessment has recently been used to adapt the curriculum more appropriately to provide for the needs of different groups, including those who find learning difficult and the most able. Information gained from checking and evaluating pupils' progress is aiding the development of the curriculum in tackling areas of relative weakness. For instance, over the last year, the school reviewed the provision for reading in order to raise achievement, with some success. The school's current priority is to focus on developing pupils' creative writing skills. There is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' basic skills in numeracy and information and communication technology. A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education helps to promote pupils' good personal development effectively. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well attended, add to pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils

have the opportunity to learn Spanish and French as well as some tackling Mandarin. It is opportunities such as these alongside the school's commitment to sport, the arts and music that contribute considerably to pupils' good attitudes towards learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a school in which pupils' individual pastoral care is given a high priority. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are all secure. Pupils feel very safe at school and explain that bullying is not a problem because they feel it is dealt with well by teachers and other adults. Strong links with outside agencies and parents add to the effectiveness of the school's good systems to support pupils' social and emotional needs. The pupils' academic guidance and support is satisfactory. In response to the last inspection report, the school implemented appropriate systems to collect information on pupils' attainment and monitor their progress. However, the use of this was until recently still being refined. Consequently, information is only now being analysed sufficiently well to identify what needs to be done to ensure pupils do not underachieve, and to challenge them to accelerate their progress throughout their time at the school. All pupils have targets, although they are not consistently referred to in all classes or in pupils' work to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders are becoming increasingly regular in their analysis of the school's results and in monitoring teaching to see where it is most effective and what needs to be improved. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. Priorities are now accurately identified, including the need to develop pupils' learning in writing. Governors have begun to play an appropriate part in checking how well the school is doing, although they are aware of the need to develop these skills further. Pupils' good personal development and well-being are strengths because leaders have made these a priority. Pupils are encouraged effectively to play their part in the life of the school, local area and wider world. Leaders have undertaken evaluation of the school's role in developing community cohesion and are tackling those issues raised. Consequently, this aspect of the school's work is satisfactory and plans are in place to strengthen further the links with other schools around Great Britain.

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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?	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?	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?	3
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?	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	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	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**

27 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sussex Road Community Primary School, Tonbridge TN9 2TP

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We were pleased to hear you like school and we agree that you do best when your teachers plan many interesting things for you to do and get involved in. You all get on with one another and are working hard to behave well in lessons and around the school. We think your school gives you the right help to know how to be healthy and safe. It provides you with good opportunities to take responsibility in school and demonstrate each 'value of the month' both in school and in the wider community.

We think your school is satisfactory. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. The curriculum planned for you meets your needs and teachers do what is expected to help you make satisfactory progress in your work, although you do better in mathematics and reading than in writing. The leaders in the school do a suitable job of running your school and know what needs to be done to make your school better. In order to help you to make faster progress we have asked the adults at your school to do three things:

- Make sure all of you get the opportunities you need to develop and apply your writing skills. That is especially the case for some of you who find learning easy.
- Keep checking to make sure your lessons are always challenging enough and interesting.
- Make better use of marking to help you understand how to improve.

You can help us by always using the advice teachers give you on how to improve your work. We wish you well for the future in your new building.

Thank you again for helping us with our work.

Yours faithfully

Jacqueline Marshall

Lead inspector