

Carden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131789
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	328643
Inspection dates	14–15 January 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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	420
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	Beryl Brand
Headteacher	Catherine Scott
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	County Oak Avenue Brighton BN1 8LU
Telephone number	01273 293677
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school adjacent to an industrial estate, in an area of the city which has high deprivation. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is significantly above that usually found in schools. A higher than average proportion of pupils has free school meals. There is very high mobility, which means that many pupils join or leave the school at various stages. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision includes three Nursery classes and two Reception classes. There is 'I Can' nursery provision for children with severe speech and language difficulties. The school has a speech and language centre for pupils from across the city who have severe speech and language difficulties. This has two classes, one in each key stage. There is a breakfast club on the premises every morning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has a number of good features. Principal amongst these is the remarkable improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes over the past two years, as a result of the extensive work of the leadership team. There is evidence that this is beginning to have a positive effect on the raising of achievement and standards throughout the school.

Standards overall are below average. However, pupils make satisfactory progress at all stages of their learning. Improving pupils' writing skills is a current focus and the latest evidence shows that progress is beginning to accelerate in writing across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well. However, some of the more able pupils are not achieving as well as they could. This is because in some lessons, the more able learners are not sufficiently challenged. This means that although pupils enjoy their learning, teaching is only satisfactory overall, but has many good features. The satisfactory curriculum meets requirements and is well enriched by a good variety of well attended additional activities and opportunities.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They have a very clear understanding of how to be healthy and keep themselves safe. Learners demonstrate much enthusiasm and enjoyment: 'I love this school' said a Year 4 boy, and 'My son can't wait to get here in the mornings' commented a parent.

Care, guidance and support are good throughout the school. Pastoral care is a particular strength. Parents describe this school as 'a safe and happy place ... a friendly and nurturing environment'. All vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have very good support which enables them to make good progress. However academic guidance is less strong in many classes, where pupils do not have individual learning targets and teachers' marking often does not help pupils to know how to improve their work.

The hard-working headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear direction for school improvement, which has begun to raise standards in the past year. The dedicated governors are very supportive of the school, but their monitoring roles are not sufficiently developed to help them challenge the school and hold it to account. They do not currently undertake strategic planning for school improvement. Parents and carers' responses are overwhelmingly positive and full of praise for what the school does for their children. These comments reflect the views of many: 'Our children have thrived at Carden'; 'I would recommend this school to others'; and 'A great school!'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Good induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and well in the EYFS classes, gaining confidence and self-esteem. Although the assessment of children's starting points is not sufficiently robust, the majority of evidence suggests that children in Nursery and Reception classes work at levels below national expectations. A significant proportion of these children join the school at levels well below expectations in the areas of personal and social education and language, literacy and communication. They make satisfactory progress across all areas of learning. The strong focus on encouraging good development of speaking and listening enables EYFS children to make good progress in gaining language skills.

Positive relationships help ensure that children are well looked after and their varied needs are well met, with the result that personal development is good. Children behave well and learn to play happily together. Teaching and learning in EYFS classes is satisfactory overall. Children enjoy the variety of interesting learning activities. Leadership of the EYFS is satisfactory, but the nursery and reception teachers do not co-ordinate their planning sufficiently to ensure continuity of teaching and the curriculum across the EYFS. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the 'I Can' group, are integrated well so that they can participate fully. The good partnerships staff create with parents help children to have a positive start to their school lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in the core subjects, especially in writing, by setting more challenging work in lessons for the more able pupils.
- Help all pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve their work by ensuring consistency in teachers' marking and by setting individual learning targets.
- Develop the monitoring and strategic roles of governors in helping the school to raise standards.

A small proportion of 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 join the school with skills at levels that are below expectations and leave the school at the end of Year 6 with below average standards overall. After the last inspection standards dropped to well below average but have now rallied. Current evidence indicates that Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their targets in the core subjects at the end of this year. Indeed, recent performance data show that pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made stronger progress in their writing since September. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well so that they make good progress. However, as a result of insufficient challenge in some lessons, there is evidence of underachievement amongst the more able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good relationships and respect for each other result in the development of positive attitudes and the good personal development and well-being of all pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in every aspect. Pupils talk confidently about the need to develop healthy lifestyles. The majority of pupils make healthy lunch choices and enjoy participation in after-school sports activities. They play safely together and know who to talk to with any concerns they may have. Behaviour is good throughout the school, as demonstrated by the dramatic fall in the rate of exclusions. As a result of recent initiatives, attendance rates have risen and are now average.

Pupils of all ages and abilities say they thoroughly enjoy school. They listen to each other and they know their views are valued. 'We always get the chance to share ideas' said a Year 5 girl. Through the very active school council, pupils of all ages are involved in school improvement and in addressing wider problems such as traffic and parking outside school, which they

successfully addressed by writing letters and designing posters. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and participating in local community activities. Their good social skills and satisfactory basic skills give them a sound preparation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is at least satisfactory throughout the school with the result that progress is satisfactory overall. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good or better and this improving teaching is beginning to have a positive impact on raising pupils' achievement. Teaching is typically energetic and well paced so that all pupils are fully attentive and engaged. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated in lessons and teachers make good use of Makaton signing to include those with communication difficulties. As a result, they make good progress. There is a purposeful atmosphere in many lessons which encourages pupils to apply themselves enthusiastically to their work. However, in a few lessons, where the introduction is too long, some pupils lose concentration and their attention lapses so that progress slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced. Learners enjoy lessons and appreciate the interesting range of activities provided for them. 'School is helping me to learn so much that I didn't know' said a Year 3 pupil. A variety of well attended additional activities provide good curriculum enrichment. There is particularly good extra provision in the areas of physical education and music, where specialist teachers provide popular new learning experiences. Pupils have helped to plant an orchard and there is an enjoyable gardening club which families attend together, so that the outside areas are a valued part of the school's learning environment. Information, communication and technology provision has improved since the last inspection, but it is not sufficiently developed across other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is definitely a school that cares' said one parent, echoing the comments of many. The quality of care and support is very good for pupils of all ages and abilities. The school has been successful in creating a calm and harmonious community in which every pupil is valued and they all work and play together well. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to help them do as well as they can. There is very good liaison with a wide variety of outside agencies which helps ensure very good support for all vulnerable pupils. However, academic guidance is less well developed. Few learners are helped to assess their own progress and teachers' marking of pupils' books does not always indicate how well learners are doing or suggest ways they could improve their work. The majority of pupils do not have individual learning targets to help them reach higher levels in the core subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Strong teamwork is a feature of this school. The headteacher and senior leadership team have shown, through their successes in improving behaviour, raising attendance levels and increasing attainment in mathematics, that the school has improved in a number of areas since the last inspection. This demonstrates satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. Leaders set sufficiently challenging targets and ensure that pupils in both the main classes and the speech and language support centres have equality of opportunity and access to all learning activities. Parents also 'are greatly appreciative of the school's accommodation and co-operation with our religious beliefs'.

The school's increasingly detailed analysis of progress and attainment data supports its effective self-evaluation processes. However, there is some disparity in assessing the youngest children's skills on joining the Reception classes. The school's self-evaluation processes lead effectively into the improvement plan. Leaders write this jointly with the local authority which provides strong support in helping the school to raise standards. Community cohesion is good in all dimensions. The school has strong partnerships with other local schools and participates strongly in its local community. For example, pupils make visits to the town council. They have made two films for other schools across the United Kingdom and in India. There is also a link with a school in South Africa and pupils correspond with each other about their lives.

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
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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?	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	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	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?	2

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**

January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Carden Primary School, Brighton, BN1 8LU

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We all enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a satisfactory school. It helps you to enjoy your work and cares for you very well. These are the things we especially like about your school.

- You work hard in lessons and some of you make good progress. Well done!
- Your behaviour is good and you clearly enjoy school. Keep it up!
- Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and fun.
- You told us how important it is to eat healthily and have lots of exercise.
- You play safely and happily together and respect each other well.
- You have a very active school council which helps to improve the school and you do a lot of things to support the local community.
- You have lots of extra activities and clubs to enjoy.
- The adults in your school take very good care of you all and help you when you have any worries.

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

- Teachers could help you to raise your standards by making sure they give you work that is challenging enough, especially those of you who find learning easier.
- Teachers could help you set your own learning targets and they could mark your books with comments that help you to know how well you are doing and how to improve your work.
- The governors could do more to check how well the school is doing.

I would like to wish you all lots of success in your future learning. Yours sincerely

Jacquie Buttriss

Lead inspector