

Coombe Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114365
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	338346
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Chris Grove

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kirsti Archer
Headteacher	Dennis O'Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2006
School address	Coombe Road Brighton BN2 4ED
Telephone number	01273 707878
Fax number	01273 707478
Email address	coomberoad@hotmail.com

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' attainment and progress, records of governors' meetings, development planning and monitoring, a range of policies and procedures, including those associated with safeguarding, curriculum planning documents and a small sample of pupils' work. Evidence was collected from some members of the school council, and from a sample of pupils, and from school staff, using questionnaires. Evidence was also gathered from parental questionnaires, of which 94 were received.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management in identifying weaknesses in pupils' outcomes and provision and in focusing on priorities for improvement
- the extent to which teaching offers challenge to ensure at least satisfactory progress by all groups of pupils
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and supports the progressive acquisition of writing skills
- how well the school promotes community cohesion.

Information about the school

Coombe Road is a primary school which is larger than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with much smaller numbers from a large range of other ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, principally speech, language and communication or specific learning difficulties, is well above average. Pupils' mobility is higher than that found in most schools. There is a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body. The school holds the Healthy Schools and International Schools awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. It is an improving school and has good features. A very positive ethos has been developed in which pupils are happy and enjoy what is on offer. The great majority of parents are very appreciative of the school's open atmosphere. One described it as 'very warm, friendly and welcoming'. Another wrote that 'The school not only cares about the children but also about the whole family.' The staff form a cohesive team, are proud of the school and, like the parents, are entirely confident in the leadership.

The inclusive ethos and the good quality of pastoral care result in the good personal development of pupils, including their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships between staff and pupils, and also between pupils, are very good. Pupils are well behaved in class and elsewhere in the school. The very positive atmosphere is set from the Early Years Foundation Stage, and permeates the whole school. The school is good at identifying the needs of pupils, including the high numbers of those who are vulnerable. Most aspects of pupils' personal development are accordingly good. However, the school's overall attendance is low because of the persistent absence of a very small minority of pupils.

At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average. By the end of Year 6, pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science have been well below average in recent years. However, there was improvement in 2009 in science, and especially in mathematics, where standards were broadly average. Results in English were lower, and were below average. Attainment in reading was much higher than that in writing, with the result that too few pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English. The most significant reason for standards that are historically lower at Year 6 than at Year 2 is to be found in the above average levels of pupils' mobility, with significant numbers of pupils joining the school during Years 3 to 6. The school's inclusive approach and openness to the local community means that the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or who may be vulnerable, has increased.

Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and is sometimes good. The relationships with pupils, based on trust and mutual respect, are a consistently good feature of all lessons. Where teaching is best, a good pace to learning, and a close match of tasks to different groups of pupils, lead to good progress. Teachers' marking does not consistently point out to pupils how they could improve their work. Similarly, teachers do not always make clear to pupils what they should achieve in their tasks in lessons. The curriculum has a number of strong features but is satisfactory overall because provision for writing is not as well developed as it could be.

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The headteacher, with the good support of the other senior leaders, has created a confident vision for, and caring ethos in, the school. Other strengths in leadership and management include the successful involvement of most parents, and the good quality of the partnerships with others to support pupils' well-being and enhance their learning. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are rigorous.

The school's ethos results from its self-critical culture. Effective self-evaluation has led to pupils' good personal outcomes, and their good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in Years 1 and 2. The need to improve writing standards has rightly been identified as a current priority. The school sets itself realistic and appropriately challenging targets. A broad range of effective monitoring activities is well established. These have resulted in some good progress within the school and to teaching that is consistently at least satisfactory. However, not enough emphasis is placed on monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Given the improvements already made and the realistic self-evaluation, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater impact from the school's self-evaluation activities through a sharper focus on measuring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing, especially in Years 3 to 6, through:
 - improving the school's curricular provision for the progressive development of skills to increase the challenge for pupils, especially those who are more able
 - accelerating progress by:
 - improving the match of tasks to different groups of pupils
 - clarifying more consistently the criteria for good work
 - providing better feedback from marking about the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Improve the school's attendance rate to at least average by concerted action to reduce the number of persistent absentees.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children's levels of attainment on entry to Year 1 are a little below average, especially in aspects of literacy. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, so that they reach broadly average standards in national assessments at the end of Year 2. Although national data show that in past years, pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 has been slower, the school's tracking data and inspection evidence show that the current progress of all pupils in these years, including boys, girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory.

Most of the pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire confirmed that they enjoy school. A very high proportion are convinced that the adults provide good care for

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them and have their best interests at heart. As a result, they feel safe at school. Pupils are well behaved in class. Although attentiveness in lessons is not consistently good, teachers have good strategies to re-engage pupils.

Pupils say that the school helps them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Small games equipment is available at playtimes, and there are a number of lunchtime and after-school sports clubs, in addition to two weekly sessions of physical education. The school provides hot meals of good quality for pupils at lunchtime. Those who bring lunchboxes show that they know about healthy food choices. The pupils who attend the breakfast club benefit from a range of healthy eating options.

The school council is influential within the school, and their concerns are acted on, although they do not control a budget. Pupils' good contributions include fund raising for charities and involvement in consultation with the local community over improvements to a nearby green space. Pupils have good opportunities to work together, for example as 'talk partners' in lessons. The positive contributions of Year 6 pupils in running the school bank serve to promote their future economic well-being. Pupils also benefit from the school's annual 'Economic Well-being Week', which is focused on money management.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

Consistently good behaviour management ensures that pupils work in a calm atmosphere. Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear through learning objectives that are appropriately worded for pupils. Pupils are helped to evaluate their understanding through the use of 'thumbs' to indicate their levels of confidence. Teaching assistants provide satisfactory and sometimes good support, though they sometimes lack an active role when teachers are working with the whole class. The marking of pupils' work does not consistently indicate the improvements that they could make.

The school offers a broad and varied curriculum based on the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Although this has led to improving standards in mathematics, provision for writing does not yet result in sufficiently high standards. Specialist provision in singing and cookery offers good enhancement. The successful introduction of French has helped pupils to develop an international dimension to their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are carefully tracked and are given good additional support. A programme of visits and visitors enriches pupils' experience. The good range of extra-curricular clubs is well attended.

School staff are committed to the ethos of support and care for all pupils. Pastoral care is accordingly good. Adults do much to reinforce pupils' self-confidence and to promote positive attitudes to learning. The needs of vulnerable pupils are identified and are met well. Personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' health and emotional development. Good arrangements are made for transfer to secondary education, especially for those who might find the transition difficult. Pupils receive specialist support through good links with outside agencies. In co-operation with the education welfare service, the school is developing sensible strategies to promote better attendance, although these have not had sufficient impact to date. The breakfast club provides a good start to the day for those who attend it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's confident leadership and strong ethos ensure high staff morale, and a positive climate for self-evaluation, though there has not been a sharp enough focus on

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how well pupils are making progress. Governors are committed to the school. The chair and vice-chair are new to their roles and are keen to support further improvements. Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities effectively, and know the school's strengths. They are less clear about past weaknesses in pupils' standards and progress, and hence have not challenged the school about academic outcomes to the extent that they should.

At the time of the inspection, the school's systems and procedures met all requirements for safeguarding. Child protection procedures, a priority for the school, are robust, and include good collaboration with outside agencies. Partnerships with local authority services are well established, particularly to provide support for vulnerable groups of pupils. The school is inclusive, is committed to promoting equal opportunities, and has good systems to track pupils' attainment and progress closely. However, the school has not consistently drawn out the implications of tracking information for the school's self-evaluation. Although the school itself is a cohesive community and has good links with the local area, and rapidly developing international links, it has not conducted an audit of its provision in order to develop a strategy to promote community cohesion at all levels.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are generally below average. This is especially evident in their language and communication and in their personal skills, including their emotional development. They settle quickly

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into life at school because of the good induction arrangements. Staff make visits to pre-school settings, and this helps to smooth the transition to school. Relationships are good because staff know the children well. The active and stimulating experiences that are provided ensure that children enjoy their learning.

Teachers' high expectations and good classroom management lead to good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Most children develop improving concentration as they engage in their tasks. They learn to play well alongside one another. All groups of children, including both boys and girls, make good progress in all areas of their learning, because staff tailor the work directly to their needs. Consequently, they enter Year 1 with attainment that is close to expectations, although progress is slower in linking sounds to letters and in writing work.

Children progress well because of the good provision. Classroom display is attractive. Teaching meets the different needs of individual children well. Staff plan a mixture of activities, some that are led by the teachers and the teaching assistants, as well as others where the children choose for themselves. The teachers are skilled at giving clear explanations and at asking questions as they work with children. This helps them to extend their thinking well, for example in their understanding of ideas such as 'heavy' and 'light'. There is a strong accent on healthy living and on physical activities, and consequently the children know how to lead healthy lifestyles. They are taught to look after themselves and therefore feel safe. The work on such topics as Diwali and Indian food develops their cultural understanding well. Opportunities to develop skills in ICT are good, with the result that children become confident users of computers.

Pastoral care is good, and is well supported by policies and procedures. The strong focus on emotional development leads to high levels of self-esteem. As a result, children become more independent and are well prepared for entry to Year 1. The teaching assistants play a valuable role in developing children's confidence and extending their learning.

Good leadership and management include effective use of assessment information about children's progress. Detailed planning for improvement ensures good provision and a good start to children's school careers. Staff work well with parents to develop children's learning, and with outside agencies to ensure their welfare. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has rightly identified writing skills and the outside area as focuses for further development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who returned the questionnaire had positive, and often very positive, views about the school. The overwhelming majority are happy with their child's experience, and feel that their child enjoys school. All agreed that the school keeps their child safe. Most parents think that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors agree with all of these judgements. Most parents think that their children are making enough progress at school. Almost all parents feel that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree that there are good aspects to leadership and management, although further improvement is needed to increase the impact of self-evaluation on teaching and the curriculum in order to accelerate pupils' progress. Small numbers of parents disagree that the school promotes a healthy lifestyle, but inspectors did not find evidence to support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Coombe Road Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 287 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	63	33	35	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	57	61	35	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	44	44	47	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	52	38	40	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	56	60	33	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	51	41	44	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	61	31	33	4	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	51	54	31	33	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	47	42	45	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	50	39	42	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	44	42	45	1	1	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	58	62	33	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	67	28	30	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Coombe Road Primary School, Brighton BN2 4ED

We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes. We especially thank those of you who filled in the pupils' questionnaire.

Coombe Road Primary is a satisfactory and improving school with good features.

These are the positive things to say about your school

- The staff have created a confident and welcoming 'feel' to your school.
- You enjoy school, behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- All the adults in the school take very good care of you.
- You feel very safe in school and understand healthy living.
- You settle into school quickly, make a really good start, and progress well in Reception and in Years 1 and 2.
- Your progress is improving in Years 3 to 6, and standards in science, and especially in maths, are rising.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school, and appreciate its good features.

We have also asked your school to make some further improvements.

What your school needs to do now

- Focus more on the impact on your progress when school leaders check up on teaching and learning.
- Raise your achievement in writing by the end of Year 6 through improvements to the curriculum and the teaching.
- Improve attendance rates to average by reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

You can help too by working hard and taking advantage of the improvements that your school will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Chris Grove

Lead Inspector

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