

Plumpton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114410
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338353
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J McBrown
Headteacher	Annie Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During the inspection eight lessons were observed and four teachers were seen. Inspectors observed the school's work, and held meetings with pupils, staff, governors, parents and carers. Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings, assessment data on pupils' current progress and reports from the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors attended an assembly. They analysed 58 questionnaires from parents and carers, 78 from pupils and 22 from staff.

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

- the effectiveness with which the school is raising attainment and improving the achievement of pupils and young children, especially in mathematics
- the extent to which pupils' personal development is underpinning standards and progress
- how effectively teaching and the curriculum are improving the quality of pupils' learning
- how effectively the school's leadership is monitoring performance and implementing strategies for improvement.

Information about the school

Most pupils in this smaller than average village school are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include learning, behavioural and emotional needs, is below average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. At the start of the current school year the falling school roll led to a reorganisation of the school into mixed-age classes, except for Year 6. The school has Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Plumpton Primary School provides a good standard of education. Children now join the school with levels of skill and knowledge that are higher than in recent years. Currently they are broadly typical for their age, although boys' writing skills are below expectations. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in the rest of the school, including those with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties, make good progress. By the age of 11, attainment is above average overall, although standards in writing are more variable. A small minority of more able pupils, while generally making good progress, do not always achieve as well as they could in some lessons, principally because they do not get a consistently challenging level of work. Neither assessment, including the marking of work, nor pupils' targets are used sufficiently to show pupils clearly how they can improve their work still further. However, in most lessons teaching promotes pupils' progress effectively, with many pupils describing lessons as fun and varied. Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning are reflected in their comments about enjoying school and the high rate of attendance. Pupils feel safe and very well supported by adults. They love the wide range of activities, including the many clubs and visits such as those to Hurstmonceaux, which enhance personal development as well as learning. The strength of music in the school is reflected in regular concerts and twice-yearly productions, which are very popular. Good behaviour contributes to the welcoming ethos of the school. The school has worked hard to develop the curriculum; one approach has been to provide extra support for pupils in danger of underachieving, which occurred in previous years, particularly in mathematics. The developing programme of whole school topics has successfully engaged pupils' enthusiasm and has helped to develop basic skills across all subjects in an exciting way. Pupils have a good understanding of the wider world, with older pupils talking knowledgeably about different beliefs and ways of life. They also enjoy the opportunity to represent their peers, both in the school council and in organising house activities.

A great strength of the school is the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. Parents and carers recognise this, and typical comments were 'This is a perfect village school, which involves the parents in a relaxed and friendly way' and 'We have been absolutely delighted with the warm, welcoming, deep community spirit.' Vulnerable pupils make good progress in learning basic skills as well as developing as confident individuals, because their needs are identified early on and support staff help them to achieve well. Staff are assisted when necessary by a range of support agencies which have excellent links with the school. The quality of care, along with the above average standard of basic skills, means that pupils are well prepared both personally and

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academically for the next phase of their education.

The school's successes in ensuring a good standard of education are due in no small part to the commitment and enthusiasm of staff in pursuing developments in key areas such as the curriculum. The headteacher, supported by other senior staff and governors, has evaluated the school's strengths accurately and planned appropriately to take the school further forward. A record of success and a determination to keep building upon it mean that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, ensuring that a higher proportion of pupils leave the school with above average standards, by providing a more consistent level of challenge for the most able pupils.
- Give pupils a better understanding of how they can improve their learning still further by giving more specific feedback to pupils and more precise marking, and using pupils' targets more effectively in the classroom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of pupils in Year 6 is just above average overall, although boys' writing standards are uneven. Observations by inspectors in class show an improvement on recent national test results. This reflects good teaching and the impact of strategies that have focused on areas in which there has been some underachievement in the past, particularly in mathematics. Potential underachievers are identified early, and given additional support where appropriate. Pupils make good progress, although occasionally a minority of more able pupils are not moved on quickly enough to the next level of work in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when well supported by teaching assistants, as was observed during the inspection. The high rate of attendance, good behaviour and the positive attitudes of pupils towards learning also contribute significantly to the good progress. Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to deal with the few instances of inappropriate behaviour. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and talk enthusiastically about the benefits of exercise and working on the school allotment. They enjoy school, particularly the projects that encourage them to learn actively, and also the excursions. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Apart from the work of the much valued school council, older pupils enthusiastically run the house activities. They enjoy helping younger pupils, for example with their reading, and take part in a variety of musical and other events which often involve pupils going out into the local community. Pupils also learn enterprise skills, for example through making and selling products and involvement in charities. They develop very well as articulate and responsible young citizens, who are very well prepared for the next stage of education and life generally. Pupils' work, particularly in poetry, also shows a capacity to reflect maturely on their feelings and surroundings. Pupils' cultural development is a strength of the school, reflected in the excellence of

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music provision. In spite of the largely monocultural context of the school, pupils have a good awareness of how people may live in a variety of ways and have different belief systems in other parts of the United Kingdom and in the wider world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers generally plan well for lessons, making good use of lesson objectives and a range of activities which engage pupils' interest and encourage them to learn actively. This was observed during the inspection when younger pupils, having made their mini-beasts in groups, went into the school grounds and then developed their speaking skills by learning how to present their projects to other pupils as if they were news reporters. These are the lessons which pupils describe as 'fun'. Teachers also plan well with teaching assistants, who then play an active role in supporting the teacher directly as well as helping pupils with special educational needs develop their understanding and skills. Although teachers frequently encourage pupils to learn independently or collaboratively, sometimes they keep the pupils sitting for too long together before getting to this stage. This results occasionally in more able pupils missing opportunities

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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to learn at a faster pace. Pupils get considerable feedback on their progress, and have individual targets, but they are not used consistently to show pupils exactly how they can proceed to the next level of work. However, the other strengths of teaching are such as to ensure good progress overall. The curriculum has been considerably modified in recent months, and pupils enjoy the range of whole-school topics such as 'Explorers' which develop a range of skills and knowledge, often combined with excursions. Three different modern foreign languages are taught in the school and there is outstanding provision for music. Good provision for vulnerable pupils means that these pupils also have equal access to all learning opportunities. The quality of care and support for all pupils is outstanding, reinforced by strong links with outside support agencies. There are well-developed procedures, as witnessed during the inspection, to ensure smooth transition for pupils to the next phase of education, and effective procedures to maintain the school's high attendance rate.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leadership rigorously monitors teaching and learning. Subject coordinators are increasingly involved in this process as well as supporting their colleagues in the ongoing process of modifying the curriculum and ensuring good professional development for all staff. Governors are knowledgeable about the school, actively involved and appropriately challenging, as well as being supportive. There is no complacency, and one of the recent developments has been the development of a detailed assessment and tracking system which ensures better identification of potential underachievers and that appropriate support is put in place, often after pupil progress meetings. All staff are held accountable for progress and all are committed to working for further improvement, as part of a team effort. The school has a strong partnership with other local schools, taking part in joint activities and making use of expertise from the local secondary school and outside bodies such as Brighton Football Club, to enhance the curriculum. The school works hard to engage parents and carers through newsletters and invitations to participate in events such as the assemblies to celebrate pupils' achievements. The school has a strong commitment to equal opportunities, as seen in the excellent provision for a blind pupil as well as for vulnerable pupils, and all pupils are encouraged and helped to join in the many activities provided. It is also a happy school with no discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are robust, and enhanced

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by a range of activities such as visits by community police officers, while a well-developed programme for personal and social education teaches pupils how to be safe. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There are very strong links with the local community, with pupils working with local groups on activities as diverse as morris dancing and local history. The school also works successfully to develop pupils' understanding of the wider world, through bringing in representatives of different faiths such as Judaism and Islam to talk to pupils. Links have been created with other schools, including one in Australia.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

In all areas except writing, children rapidly acquire knowledge and skills after they join the Early Years Foundation Stage. They become eager and confident learners, keen to engage in conversation, engaging well with adults and learning to cooperate constructively with each other. During the inspection, children were observed in making choices about how to develop their own learning after enjoying the 'hungry caterpillar' song. They were also observed developing good computer skills as they busily practised changing font sizes and colours. Children are regularly assessed and their progress monitored. The leadership has organised the curriculum well and adults plan activities jointly. As a result, there is a good range of activities both indoors and outdoors, although opportunities are sometimes missed to develop boys' writing skills, the weakest aspect of their progress, in a wider range of contexts. Children learn to exercise regularly and quickly develop a consciousness of why they should practice good hygiene

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and be kept healthy. Staff benefit from good professional development within the local school cluster. They manage behaviour and resources well and children feel very secure. Parents and carers welcome this and the fact that they are welcomed into school, and help with their children's learning. They are very appreciative of the good provision. There are good links with local pre-schools, while at the end of the school year children transfer confidently into Year 1. Staff are also working hard to further develop the outdoor area so that it will offer even more opportunities for a wide range of activities.

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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers feel that their children enjoy school. They believe that the school provides a safe and welcoming environment and feel well informed about how their children are doing. A small minority of parents and carers have concerns in several areas, to do with the amount of progress their children make in school, the quality of teaching, the degree to which they are enabled to support their children's learning, the effectiveness with which the school prepares their children for the next stage of education and the degree to which the school takes account of their views. A larger minority have concerns about the quality of leadership in the school. Inspectors acknowledge the concerns, but judge that most pupils make good progress in school and are taught well. They also judge that the school makes considerable efforts to keep parents and carers informed about what goes on in school and encourages them to take a strong interest in their children's learning. Inspectors agree with the views of the vast majority of parents and carers that the quality of care is high. Inspectors judge that the quality of leadership and management at all levels is good, and that when the leadership has dealt with major challenges such as a falling school roll and its impact on class organisation, and raising standards in some key areas like mathematics, it has done so in ways that have the best interests of pupils at heart.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Plumpton 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 131 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	41	32	55	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	43	32	55	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	27	34	59	8	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	29	23	40	13	22	4	7
The teaching is good at this school	15	26	24	41	14	24	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	24	26	45	14	24	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	33	36	62	1	2	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)	14	24	28	48	8	14	5	9
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	26	24	41	14	24	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	14	37	64	10	17	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	19	26	45	15	26	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	10	17	22	38	15	26	8	14
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	26	27	47	11	19	3	5

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



7 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Plumpton Primary School, Lewes BN7 3EB

We were very grateful for your polite and friendly welcome when we visited your school this week. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons and around the school, and talking to you. You told us lots of interesting things about how much you liked the school, particularly the teachers, the 'fun' activities and especially the range of clubs and visits outside school.

Plumpton Primary School gives you a good standard of education. The headteacher leads the school well. Your teachers teach you well, and most of you make good progress in your work and get good results. You have improved in things which some of you found difficult, such as mathematics. Just occasionally some of you, especially the cleverest, find the work too easy. You are very good at some subjects, especially music. We know that the way the school looks after you is outstanding, and that you feel safe. It is a very friendly school, and you enjoy helping each other, especially those younger than yourselves. You work hard and you attend school more regularly than pupils in many other schools so well done! We know that some of you would like more information on exactly how well you are doing and how you can improve your work still further.

In order that your good school can help you do even better, we have given it two things to do:

- Make sure that you always get work which is hard enough, so that those of you who sometimes find it easy can do even better by the time you leave Year 6.
- Give you more information in your books, and use your targets more, so that you know exactly how well you are doing in your work and how you can improve it.

You can help your teachers help you to do your best by continuing to work hard. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver

Lead inspector

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