

Mile Oak Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114430
Local Authority	Brighton And Hove
Inspection number	338358
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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	484
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Greg Barnes
Headteacher	Ms Susan Mines
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2006
School address	Graham Avenue Portslade Brighton BN41 2WN
Telephone number	01273 294880
Fax number	01273 294882
Email address	office@mileoak.brighton-hove.sch.uk

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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

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited fifteen lessons, carried out three accompanied walks around the school, visiting part lessons, held meetings with the chair of governors, parents, staff, senior leaders, other managers, and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation regarding the curriculum, attendance, monitoring and safeguarding records, various policies, and data relating to the tracking of pupils' progress.

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

- What school analysis revealed about the progress of pupils, particularly the attainment and achievement of various pupil groups and their standards in writing.
- How rigorously the monitoring, evaluation and action planning of leaders at all levels is carried out.
- How good the curriculum planning is of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Whether assessment is being well used to plan challenging work for different pupil groups.
- The apparent strengths in the care, guidance and support and personal development of pupils.

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average and has above the expected number of pupils entitled to free school meals. Primarily, pupils are from a White British background and there is a well below average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above average. Most have speech and language and/or specific learning difficulties. There are four pupils who have a statement of special educational needs; this is below average. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through three Reception classes. The school has Healthy School status, the Activemark, is an FA Charter school and an eco-school. In 2007 it won the National Literacy Trust's Reading Connects Award.

The school runs a breakfast club and a private provider oversees the after school club.

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

2

Main findings

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has strengths in the excellent care, guidance and support it provides and in the personal development of pupils. The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school, based around improving teaching and raising academic standards. Well supported by her deputy headteacher and senior managers, the result has been a gradual improvement in the achievement of pupils.

On entry to Reception, children have lower than expected levels of skills and knowledge, particularly in communication and aspects of literacy. They progress well and leave Reception with levels slightly above those expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been well below average in recent years, with levels in mathematics and writing being low. Issues have been addressed; for example, new approaches to how pupils, particularly boys, are prepared for written exercises have been introduced. Improvement has taken place and standards in the unvalidated 2009 test results are broadly average. This reflects satisfactory progress for these pupils, although weaknesses in writing remain.

Pupils say they enjoy school. They recognise that adults have their best interests at heart and that they are well cared for. Safeguarding issues are given appropriate importance. Pupils work well together and want to get involved in their learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships within lessons are positive. The quality of teaching varies and consequently pupil progress is not consistent. Some outstanding teaching was observed, in Year 6 for example, with good subject knowledge leading to probing questioning, and planning that challenges pupils of different abilities. This demonstrates that the school has models of practice in place that could be more effectively shared with all staff. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is not a high enough expectation of what pupils can achieve, and their progress dips. In some lessons, learning objectives are not refined enough to clearly show pupils what they are expected to learn. Good clear marking takes place, but not always, and pupils do not therefore have sufficient guidance about how they can improve their work.

There is a rigour to the senior leadership's monitoring, and the tracking of pupils' progress is now being well addressed through the Pathways to Progress system. This allows underachievement to be identified earlier and appropriate intervention to be introduced. However, not all managers at subject level are monitoring with a sufficient focus on acquiring an accurate overview of the standards and achievement of pupils. Consequently, there are missed opportunities in development planning to identify where

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progress can be quickened. Standards in science have been consistently average, and a whole-school ethos of reading for pleasure has been established (hence the national award), which has subsequently encouraged more writing. These, together with the recent improvement in pupil standards and achievement, reflect a sound capacity to take the school forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards, particularly in writing, by removing the inconsistencies in teaching, through:
 - sharing good practice within the school
 - ensuring that, in all lessons, plans have clear learning objectives with suitably high expectations of pupils
 - ensuring that marking gives pupils a clear understanding of how to improve their work.
- Use assessment data effectively to plan activities that challenge and are closely matched to the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure all subject managers have an accurate overview of standards and progress in their areas through more rigorous monitoring and analysis of data.

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

Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, progress satisfactorily from their starting points. Their progress reflects the quality of teaching. In the outstanding lessons pupils progressed very well. For example, in one mathematics lesson, pupils were very motivated by, and engaged fully in their learning, as they applied their numeracy skills to a real-life problem of budgeting for a holiday abroad. A very attractive resource book aided the pupils' understanding of the task. An interesting start to a good religious education lesson immediately captured the imagination of pupils. Then, a good mix of different teaching strategies involving tactile and visual approaches helped cater for the different learning styles of pupils. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and hence progress is sound rather than better. In satisfactory lessons, pupils' progress slowed because the learning objective was not made clear enough and many were uncertain what they were expected to learn.

In the recent past, at the end of Years 2 and 6, standards have been well below average, particularly in writing and, school analysis reveals, for younger boys. This has reflected the inconsistent quality of teaching and the consequent degree of underachievement for some pupils. Changes have been introduced. The delivery of mathematics across the school has been mapped and there is a move towards a more skill-based curriculum. More opportunities for discussion prior to writing have been introduced, especially for boys, and this has led to the use of a wider selection of vocabulary. These are having a positive effect. In the unvalidated results for the national

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tests at the end of Year 6, achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average, although writing remains the weaker element.

The effective work by the school in gaining the various national awards is encouraging healthy lifestyles. The pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy, and say they feel safe. Most have a healthy lunch and say that they take part in a wide variety of activities. The after school cookery club promotes healthy diets and is oversubscribed. Pupils are well aware of ecological issues, and talk about recycling and Green Day. They are keen to take on responsibility and make decisions. For example, as school councillors they have promoted the friendship bench. However, there is room for them to take part in a wider range of decision-making, particularly about their learning. Pupils have sound levels of basic skills, but have some very good opportunities to participate in financial activities and work as teams. Classes cooperate well during Money Week and Year 6 experience an Enterprise Week with a local bank, developing entrepreneurial skills. Hence, pupils are well prepared for future life.

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	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the good or better lessons pupils have a clear idea of what they are expected to learn, and imaginative and varied approaches are used to stimulate their interest. In satisfactory lessons, planning is insufficiently detailed, expectations are too low and the learning expected of different groups of pupils is not identified. Consequently progress slows. In many lessons teaching assistants are deployed well, but their impact on learning could be increased through more guidance in teachers' planning on what the pupils in their group are expected to learn. Much work has been carried out on the use of assessment techniques and this is having a positive effect in the classroom, for example in the quality of oral feedback to pupils. There remain, however, inconsistencies in the helpfulness of marking. Consequently, not all pupils have a clear idea of how to improve their work.

The good curriculum provides a number of opportunities for learning to be made real for pupils. Some effective links between subjects are made, such as building on the pupils' Madagascar work in mathematics. Another positive move is the use of the outdoors, for example, to make mathematics more practical for pupils. The school acknowledges there is more to do to maximise this, and introduce other creative strategies which will help deliver a more skills-based curriculum. The reading curriculum is particularly well developed with the use of accelerated reading to motivate pupils. They are proud of becoming Reading Champions and are eager to accept the benefits, such as taking home a reading case. Here, they read or take part in an activity relating to the theme of the case, whether dinosaurs or metal detecting. A piece of writing is the result and the generally good quality of this reflects pupils' high motivation. The curriculum is well enhanced by a range of clubs, residential and other trips, and visitors, such as the maths magician.

An extremely caring, supportive ethos has been established. Parents and pupils appreciate the pastoral work undertaken. Pupils feel the school respects them and will act quickly upon any concerns they have. Robust child protection and other health and safety arrangements exist. The emotional needs of pupils are very well met through a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme as well as the provision of a learning mentor and school counsellor. The work of the learning assistants helps ensure that pupils who have special educational needs progress in line with their peers. The school has established effective links with a wide range of external agencies that benefit pupils in need of further support. The provision of a breakfast club further supports families, and pupils are happy to attend.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior leaders have established an effective vision for improvement. Their regular monitoring is bringing improvement and has brought about, for example, better levels of progress. Teachers benefit from detailed guidance provided as a result of the monitoring. However, there is a way to go to iron out the inconsistencies that still exist, and thereby promote good progress across the school. Senior managers demonstrate their commitment to equality well through the tracking, at whole-school level, of the progress of different pupil groups. Not all subject leaders have adopted this rigorous approach. In many subject development plans, there is insufficient reference to academic standards and progress. Also, it is not made clear how the subject contributes to the overall school development plan, for example in developing writing skills. Governors gain a satisfactory knowledge of the school through regular visits, although their value could be maximised through better organisation and recording of findings. Community cohesion is well promoted through links with the locality and the international link with Zambia, for example. The school acknowledges the need to develop more links with other organisations in Britain to provide pupils with a better understanding of life in a multicultural society.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

'The children come in happy and go home happy'. This comment was typical of parents who feel their children have been well prepared for entry into Reception. The children

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behave well. Their independence is encouraged through good strategies such as self-registering, and a recognition, arising from child discussions, of their personal preferences. Good teaching and a concentration on speaking and listening help address some consistent weaknesses of children on entry to Reception. A warm, welcoming environment helps children to feel valued. They obviously enjoy learning. The curriculum is good and children progress well, particularly in their personal development and knowledge and understanding of the world. This results from activities being well matched, in the classroom, to the needs of children. The external area is satisfactorily resourced. However, there are missed opportunities to focus on what learning is expected of children during outdoor activities. Leadership has been effective, particularly in promoting the in-service training of staff, and in improving the quality of the indoor provision. The children have a very good understanding of healthy living; a number of reminders were left with parents to bring scooters to school at the end of the day!

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

Parents were overwhelmingly supportive and happy with their child's experience of school. One parent summed this up when writing, 'I only have the highest regard for the school and its leadership'. A very few had concerns about the progress of their children and whether the school was meeting their needs. Overall, inspectors judged this to be satisfactory. Again, a small number had concerns about behaviour. During the inspection behaviour was judged good by inspectors. This was also reflected in the comments of pupils who spoke of occasional boisterous behaviour, but that any incidents were well handled by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mile Oak 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 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 484 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	65	24	34	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	75	17	24	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	54	29	41	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	59	25	35	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	62	25	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	56	29	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	59	29	41	0	0	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)	31	44	33	47	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	49	31	44	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	45	32	45	5	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	42	40	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	66	23	32	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	65	24	34	0	0	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 Mile Oak Primary School, Brighton, BN41 2WN

Thank you for your kind welcome when we visited your school. You were eager to tell us about the school and we listened carefully to what you had to say. We believe the school is satisfactory, which means that it does some things well and that it could do some things even better. I am writing to let you know what we found.

The children in Reception get off to a good start. We like the way the school is improving how quickly you all learn. Your reading is really coming on well because the school encourages you so well. Well done to the Reading Champions and your reading walk is interesting! We also like the way you are developing as young people. You told us you were happy at school, and that you felt safe. Keep up the good work with your eco-school activities.

We believe, like you do, that you get a very high level of care and support in the school. Many of you said you enjoy lessons because they are fun. You told us of the trips you go on and the clubs you attend. The cooking club is obviously popular.

We have asked your school to look at three things to try to make things even better.

- Ensure that all of your teachers plan work that challenges you to do your best.
- Ensure that, on top of the good spoken feedback you get from teachers, they make it very clear to you in lessons and in marking what you are expected to learn and that you know how to improve your work.
- Ensure that adults with responsibility for subject areas have a clearer view of the standards of your work and what progress you are making.

Thank you again for your help and your welcome. I wish you all the very best for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector

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