

Northiam Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114516
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338388
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Jackie Krafft HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ivan Rudd
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Thewlis
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Nine lessons were observed and all three teachers seen. Inspectors spent almost half their time looking at learning and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books, the school's tracking data on pupils' attainment and progress, the school improvement plan, examples of the school's monitoring, governors' minutes and a range of policies. The team read 40 pupil questionnaires, 23 questionnaires from parents and carers and nine questionnaires from staff.

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

- how effectively the curriculum and the quality of teaching is informed by robust assessment information to provide all pupils with the challenge and support they need to achieve well, including more able pupils and boys, particularly in English
- whether children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and partnership with parents
- the rigour of self-evaluation at all levels, including governance.

Information about the school

Northiam is a small village primary school. The number of pupils on the school's roll has been falling over time but there has been an increase this year. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The main needs of this group are dyslexia or emotional and behavioural needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided for in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. There are two other mixed-age classes.

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

Northiam provides its pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with a sound education within an attractive, orderly environment where they are happy and make satisfactory progress in their learning. Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe and well cared for. One parent noted: 'The school has really supported my child well and has taken measures to ensure my child's welfare and development' we are kept well informed and they have put in place the appropriate agencies needed.' The efforts made by the school's leaders to address behaviour issues identified in the previous inspection and to build stronger links with parents are paying dividends. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, behave appropriately and enjoy the range of activities on offer. Parents report that they feel informed about their child's progress and most feel that the school deals effectively with any unacceptable behaviour. Provision in the Early Year Foundation Stage has improved and is now good. Consequently, the school has an improving reputation in the local community and the previous decline in pupil numbers is being reversed.

These improvements are not yet mirrored in securing consistently good teaching and learning to ensure pupils make better progress and achieve well. Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory, there are inconsistencies across different year groups and subjects. This is because assessment information is not used effectively to plan activities that are carefully matched to pupils' different needs or are sufficiently challenging and varied to maintain a good pace of learning. There are also missed opportunities for pupils to develop and explain their ideas. Teachers do not consistently assess how well pupils are learning throughout a lesson to identify when some pupils, particularly the most able, are ready to be moved on to the next step.

Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that individual pupils make to ensure that they are all on track to reach the levels expected for their age. Appropriate additional support is provided to help those who need it. However, the full range of information leaders have about the school's performance is not analysed with sufficient rigour to help them identify precisely how to improve the school's effectiveness further and to ensure that pupils make good rather than satisfactory progress. Plans for improvement lack an explicit focus on securing consistently good teaching and learning and precise, quantifiable measures against which the progress and success of actions can be measured. These omissions hinder the governors' ability to provide more robust challenge and to hold staff to account for increasing the pace of improvement and pupils' outcomes. However, governors are supportive of the school. The challenge they do provide has contributed to the improvements made in several aspects of the school's work since the previous

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inspection. Improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, greater community links, more positive partnership with parents, better pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning demonstrate that leaders have satisfactory capacity to secure further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by:
 - ensuring activities are varied and carefully matched to the full range of pupils' different needs
 - providing opportunities for all pupils to develop their ideas
 - providing consistently good levels of challenge through all parts of the lesson
 - making better use of ongoing assessment in lessons to identify when pupils, particularly the most able, can be moved on to the next steps at a faster pace.
- Increase the impact of leaders on securing good outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that the full range of tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly to secure accurate self-evaluation and improve strategic planning
 - prioritising actions to explicitly improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - identifying quantifiable measures against which to evaluate the success of any changes introduced
 - including milestones in development planning against which any progress that is being made can be measured so that plans can be adjusted if necessary to keep on track.

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

In the large majority of lessons seen, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made at least satisfactory progress in their learning. The work seen in their books shows that all pupils acquire the skills and knowledge expected for their age and that they are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their learning. Although broadly average, their skills in reading are stronger than in writing. They enjoy lessons, attend school regularly and have good relationships with each other and the adults who work with them. They demonstrate an ability to work appropriately together in groups as well as independently. They are confident, generally attentive in lessons and respond enthusiastically when challenging activities are provided. When activities are not sufficiently engaging, however, some pupils lose concentration, become restless or their pace of learning slows. They respond positively to opportunities to make decisions and choices about their learning, explaining that they would like to do this more. They have some opportunities to assess their own learning in lessons but these skills are not yet well developed. Their response to the questionnaire indicates that some pupils are unclear about how well they are doing. They understand that they have targets to help them improve but are not consistently involved in developing and

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reviewing these.

Pupils have an appropriate understanding of the importance of eating healthily, taking regular exercise and maintaining levels of hygiene. For example, they readily explain the need to wash their hands after being with the chickens. They know right from wrong, and are polite and courteous. They are confident that there is someone they can talk to if they are worried or anxious about anything, and that their views are listened to. 'We have a worry box but there isn't usually anything in it,' one pupil reported. They make an appropriate contribution to the school and local community, for example through the school council, acting as peer mediators and planting bulbs in the village. However, their understanding of the cultural and religious diversity of the wider United Kingdom and global communities is not as well developed.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers routinely plan lessons which are appropriately structured and provide pupils with opportunities to work independently and in groups. They share the lesson objectives with pupils and the criteria by which they can judge their success. However,

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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there are inconsistencies. For example, lessons are not consistently well matched to individual needs so learning slows for these pupils. The most effective teaching seen in the school promotes good progress and enjoyment and is characterised by:

- clarity of explanation based on good teacher subject knowledge
- opportunities for pupils to develop and explain their ideas
- interesting, relevant and varied activities which are well matched to pupils' different needs
- creative use of good quality resources, including information and communication technology (ICT)
- high expectations of pupils' involvement
- clear routines which pupils and other adults understand
- skilful questioning to assess the pupils' level of understanding, correct misconceptions and move learning on at a brisk pace.

Subjects are appropriately linked through a 'learning journey' topic to ensure the curriculum is relevant and meaningful to all pupils. It is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors which make a particular contribution to pupils' enjoyment. For example, they spoke animatedly about dressing up when visitors came to the school as part of their study of the Second World War and about a trip to Dover. Pupils also enjoy attending maths master classes at a local secondary school. Developing the literacy curriculum is a priority for the school, particularly opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and at length.

The school knows its pupils well and quickly identifies any who may have specific needs or learning difficulties, including the most vulnerable and those with challenging behaviour. It works well with an appropriate range of specialists and external agencies to secure additional support and guidance to help these pupils overcome any barriers to their learning. One parent who responded to the questionnaire particularly valued the support they were given to engage their son more in reading. All pupils are fully involved in the life of the school, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities; consequently they make similar progress to their peers. However, the quality of support they receive in some lessons is inconsistent.

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?

Leaders at all levels, including governors, have had a clear and successful focus on

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addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. There is a shared understanding that they are on a journey and more needs to be done to secure a consistently upward trend of improvement in the achievement of pupils. Staff feel valued and their commitment to the school's vision for improvement is demonstrated in the overwhelmingly positive response to the questionnaire. Regular pupil progress meetings, effective partnerships with parents and carers and good links with other agencies ensure that the school has appropriate systems in place to safeguard pupils, promote regular attendance, tackle discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. There are shortcomings in the rigour of analysis by leaders and managers and in the quality of development planning, in particular with regard to the focus on improving teaching.

A small minority of parents feel that communication could be improved further and the school could take more account of their views or concerns. Staff undertake relevant training and are developing specific skills and expertise to meet the identified needs of their pupils, for example in supporting pupils with dyslexia. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily through its effective community links, but the development of wider links is in the early stages and not yet having an impact on pupils' cultural awareness.

Governors have a positive relationship with staff and understand their roles and responsibilities. They are well organised and procedures have been put in place to ensure they meet their statutory duties, spend time in the school and understand its strengths and weaknesses appropriately. The challenge they provide has made a contribution to developing community and parental links but has not yet had an impact on improving the consistency and quality of teaching and learning.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because provision is carefully matched to their learning, welfare and development needs. Adults are well qualified and have a good understanding of how young children learn. This is underpinned by the systematic, ongoing assessment of how well children are learning and developing. As a result, they are provided with interesting and stimulating learning opportunities and good quality, varied resources. All areas of learning are planned for carefully, although there are limitations to the outdoor learning space. There are high expectations and clear routines. Consequently children settle quickly, are confident, happy, inquisitive and sociable. They demonstrate good levels of concentration, for example when learning phonics together with the teacher, and have well-developed skills to work independently and make meaningful choices. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is reflected in the improved quality of provision since the previous inspection.

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 who responded to the questionnaire are positive about the work of the school. All agree that their children are kept safe and most agree that their children enjoy school. Parents are least positive about how the school takes account of their concerns or suggestions and a small minority also included additional comments explaining they would like better communication. Others gave examples of how the school has acted on their concerns and communicated with them well. The school has sought parents' views appropriately, for example through a questionnaire, sends home weekly newsletters and there is a regular parent-governor forum to support greater communication.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northiam Church of England 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 65 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	70	6	26	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	70	6	26	0	0	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	39	13	57	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	48	11	48	0	0	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	12	52	9	39	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	43	10	43	2	9	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	57	9	39	0	0	1	4
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)	6	26	11	48	1	4	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	48	10	43	0	0	2	9
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	39	13	57	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	48	8	35	4	17	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	52	9	39	1	4	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	57	9	39	1	4	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.



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4 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northiam Church of England Primary School, Rye, TN31 6NB

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We especially enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and sharing in the assembly about Malawi with you. You were friendly and confident and told us what you thought very clearly. We believe your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Your school is an attractive place to learn and the youngest children get off to a good start when they join the Reception class. You and your parents told us that you like school and it is a caring place where you feel safe. You know who to talk to if you have any worries. You have lots of visitors who come and talk to you and you also go on some interesting trips. We were interested to see that you looked after chickens and sold the eggs they laid. You like doing this too. The village should start to look colourful soon when the bulbs you have planted start to flower.

Your school has made improvements and there are things that it does well, but also there are some things that could be better. We have asked the staff to help you even more by making sure your lessons are all as good as the best so that you can make even more progress. We also want them to keep checking that what they are doing to improve your school is helping you learn as well as you can.

Thank you again for making us so welcome and we hope that you carry on working hard and enjoying being at school.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Krafft

Her Majesty's Inspector

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