

# Firle Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114525
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338390
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gavin Jones

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Damian Mooncie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Douglas Kidd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 December 2006
<b>School address</b>	The Street Firle Lewes BN8 6LF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 858260
<b>Fax number</b>	01273 858260
<b>Email address</b>	office@firle-school.e-sussex.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	338390

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited five lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school development plan, minutes of meetings, records of progress, lesson planning, safeguarding and welfare arrangements and parental questionnaires.

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

- whether teachers were catering sufficiently for the needs of boys in their planning and teaching
- how well subject leaders are now playing their full part in driving the school forward in their various subjects
- whether the school's good provision of care translates into good outcomes for the personal development of pupils
- confirm an accurate picture of children's levels of skills and understanding as they enter the school and the progress they make through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

This small village primary school has four mixed-age classes. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds, with no pupils for whom English is not their home language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There are many more pupils than average who arrive at the school at times other than in the Reception class. Last year, half of the pupils in Year 6 were in this category. Staff turnover has been high over the recent past.

**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

Firle Church of England Primary School is a satisfactory school. It is an improving school that has a number of good features, but standards have only recently begun to improve. This has been largely due to strategies, put in place by the headteacher, beginning to take effect alongside more settled staffing. The turbulence in staffing had a negative effect both on outcomes for pupils and for the implementation of systems and innovations. All staff and governors are firmly committed to achieving the headteacher's ambitious visions for the school, but it is too soon for strategies to gather momentum and have a more pronounced effect on standards and progress. It is because of the current improvements made in standards, the ongoing positive effects of strategies in place and of improvements to governance that the school is now well placed to make more and sustained improvements. The school's self-evaluation is accurate with the inspection agreeing with the vast majority of its judgements. It has a good capacity to improve.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage due to regularly good teaching and provision. Elsewhere, while good teaching was seen, changes in staffing have meant that teaching is satisfactory over time. The school tracks pupils' progress well and teachers make good use of this information to organise pupils into ability groups. However, teachers do not always check on progress within lessons often enough, nor do they plan well enough for some of the vulnerable pupils in all lessons.

The curriculum is regularly refreshed by innovative school-wide topics, such as 'the circus' and 'natural Firle'. Such topics not only create interest and excitement, but bring to the school many outside visitors and specialists. In doing so the school taps in to many professionals associated with the village and outlying communities, such as farmers and artists, thus cementing excellent local community links.

Pupils make sound progress across the school although it is sometimes difficult to quantify this progress as half of the pupils in Year 6 last year were not in the school's Reception class. Equally, data show that the pupils who did have the complete 'Firle experience', from Reception to Year 6, made good rather than satisfactory progress. However, standards are now average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are better in English, following concerted school-wide efforts, than they are in mathematics and science. All pupils, whatever their length of time at the school, make good progress in their personal development, with the school determined that pupils from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds will not only mix well together but will thrive at the school. The school manages this through good care, support and guidance from all staff. Although attendance is only average, compared with national figures, this is caused mainly by a small and changing group of pupils for whom family

**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

issues create barriers to their regular attendance.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards in mathematics and science by:
  - ensuring subject leaders make good use of assessment information in these subjects
  - supporting subject leaders in monitoring learning and teaching
  - checking that interventions currently in use fully meet the needs of all pupils.
- Improve teaching so that it is more consistently good by:
  - embedding the use of assessment strategies during lessons, so that teachers check pupils' understanding more regularly
  - ensuring planning reflects more accurately the levels at which groups of pupils and vulnerable individuals are working
  - making better use of teaching assistants, especially in the early parts of lessons.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils enjoy being in school and appreciate its caring and inclusive ethos. They respond well to the value staff place on their achievements, as evidenced by their positive attitudes to learning. These attitudes support their achievement well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their class mates, as they are supported well by the special needs teaching assistant. Pupils' enjoyment of their work is particularly noticeable when they talk about the 'special parts' of the curriculum, such as topic work and school-wide themes. When testing material for a duck's rain hat in Years 1 and 2, their excitement at examining materials was palpable.

The quality of learning, standards seen in lessons and work in pupils' books confirm that relative to their starting points, all pupils make at least satisfactory progress with a significant minority making good progress. This latter element is growing as teaching and learning improve. The school has worked hard to improve standards in English and the most recent standards reached by last year's Year 6 exemplify this, as they are significantly above average. The school has rightly identified that the time is right to give mathematics and science the same time and effort to seek improvements.

Standards by the end of Year 2 were significantly above average last year for the first time and the school is keen to build on this success. Data suggested that boys were not doing as well as girls. However, on closer examination, it is evident that more boys than girls in this Year 6 group of only 12 pupils had special educational needs and/or disabilities, while the most able pupils in this cohort had always been a group of girls.

Pupils show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles when discussing lunch with the inspector. They know about keeping safe and their own conduct at playtimes helps them and others to keep free from harm. The vast majority of pupils behave well at all times.

**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

Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities such as membership of the school council. When a girl was questioned about whether she acted as an official 'playground buddy', looking after a small child at playtime, she responded, 'no, I look after her because it's a good thing to do' which shows the school's Christian ethos is rubbing off on pupils. Pupils contribute very well to their school and through many activities within the local community. They all understand the links between their school and one in Malawi and information about the other school is prominently displayed in many classes. However, their understanding of what life is like in other parts of the United Kingdom, for example in a big city, is not as good. The school's average attendance figures, along with the average standards reached by Year 6, show that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future well-being, although they are confident, capable and well-rounded young citizens.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Although the teaching seen during the inspection was good, over time, as a result of many changes in staffing, teaching has been satisfactory, as confirmed by the standards

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

**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

pupils have reached in previous years. Some inconsistencies remain. Lesson planning does not always show enough detail about what pupils, especially vulnerable ones, are going to learn, although it often shows the activities for different groups. It does not highlight how teaching assistants will be utilised to support learning. As a result, teaching assistants can spend too long sitting with pupils while teachers carry out the teaching, instead of taking a more active part in the learning process. Teachers question pupils and use the interactive whiteboard well to gain and retain the focus of pupils, using it to demonstrate procedures and collate information. Relationships are strong, and behaviour management has a light touch. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning, behave well and show good attitudes to their work, supporting their learning considerably.

The curriculum encourages pupils to learn, as it is often interesting, exciting and helps pupils understand how subjects link together. After-school activities are excellent, with most pupils attending an activity each week. The school's efforts to support those pupils who have particular gifts and talents are good, with a number of pupils attending a design and technology master class during the inspection, for example. A highlight of the curriculum is the annual all-encompassing theme which pupils look forward to. A wide range of artists from the parent group gave great support and provided expertise to a large art project. Equally, this supported local community links very well. The school acknowledges that information and communication technology is an area it needs to improve.

Classes are small and many pupils are local to the school. There is a family ethos about the school, which is enhanced by the good care taken of all pupils, especially those who are vulnerable in any way. The teaching assistant, who is responsible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, works tirelessly, giving them both personal and academic support, making good use of a range of interventions and tracking their progress well.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### **How effective are leadership and management?**

Staff and governors are united in their commitment to helping the school improve. The success of their various strategies and interventions is only recently becoming evident as staffing becomes more settled and the role of governors and subject leaders improves. The headteacher has been at the heart of these improvements and his ambition and

**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

drive has guided the school through some difficult times. Provision is systematically evaluated and the outcomes are used to inform priorities for improvement. The inspection team agrees with the vast majority of the school's judgements. The headteacher monitors the progress of pupils as well as the effectiveness of teaching. However, the emphasis has been more on monitoring teaching than learning. Middle managers have a vastly differing range of experience with one in post for seven years and another for only nine weeks. In spite of this, there has been an improvement in the quality of subject leadership since the last inspection. Results in English have improved and those in mathematics are currently being scrutinised by the new subject leader for further improvement.

Strong links have been made with outside agencies and a range of other schools, all of which give good support to the curriculum and to pupils' progress. These agencies and links support both the most and least able pupils and support the good progress some of these pupils make, illustrating the keen interest the school has in ensuring pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. The school has made excellent links with the local community and with a school in Malawi, to which the headteacher has already visited. However, the school has identified that it still needs to promote further plans for a national dimension to its community cohesion plans. Governors are making a much stronger contribution through clearer committee structures, regular training and a more strategic view of their role. They are now gathering information for themselves in order to check the school's progress in its plans for further development. All arrangements and policies relating to the safeguarding, safety and care of pupils are in place and are monitored. Child protection, health and safety, risk assessments and first aid are all in place. This contributes well to the safe, happy and caring atmosphere which is evident throughout the school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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



**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

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

**3**

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is successful in laying down secure foundations for future learning. Children's skills and understanding are in line with what is typically expected when they enter the school. However, the small numbers in each cohort mean that this balance of skills and understanding is prone to change from year to year. Some aspects of communication and mathematical development are slightly weaker than other areas of learning on entry. Good induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and parents feel well informed about the progress their children make. Effective provision results in children making good progress from their starting points, with a significant majority reaching average levels at the end of the Reception year with a few reaching beyond this. Relationships are strong as is teamwork. Children are keen to do well and benefit from plentiful resources, although in a fairly small classroom resources sometimes appear too plentiful and can mask specific areas of learning. Teaching is good because staff have a good understanding of how children learn. They provide a broad range of activities to promote all areas of learning. Although planning builds well on children's interests, its links to assessments are not as clearly seen; neither is there always sufficient detail in the learning objectives to enable staff to extend learning. There is a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. The outside area is not ideal as there is no cover for it. In spite of this, it is well used to support learning. The leader of the class is reflective and has a cogent development plan in place.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, commenting on how much their children enjoy school. They are particularly positive in their comments about the care taken of their children. One parent disagrees with the statement that the school keep parents well informed of pupils' progress and prepares pupils for transfer between schools. The inspection could not find further evidence to support these concerns.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Firle 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	85	4	12	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	79	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	64	10	30	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	58	12	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	55	14	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	64	9	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	45	16	48	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)	16	48	13	39	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	52	15	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	61	9	27	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	64	10	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	76	7	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	79	6	18	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



5 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firle Church of England Primary School, Firle, BN8 6LF

Thank you all for your help when we visited your school for its inspection. You are proud and happy to be in the school and sharing your views with us was very helpful.

Here are some of the highlights we saw on our visit:

- your curriculum is good and provides you with interesting things to learn
- the recent high standards at the end of Year 2 and in English at Year 6
- the good care shown to you by all your teachers and helpers
- your behaviour, your understanding of healthy lifestyles, the way you know how to keep safe and how you contribute to your local community are all good
- the ways in which the headteacher and governors lead the school and help it improve
- the good progress that the youngest children make in the Reception class.

The school wants to improve further and we have suggested some ways in which it might do this by:

- helping all teachers to make sure that you all make good progress in lessons
- improving the standards you reach in mathematics and science to the same levels as those in English in Year 6.

I am sure that you will do your best to work hard at all times and continue to enjoy your time at Firle.

Thank you again for such an interesting two days at your school.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones

Lead Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**