

Pells Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114536
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338393
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrussell

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	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Micheal Turner
Headteacher	Kerri Burns
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons and one assembly. They observed the school's work and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. They also looked at policies and documents, including the school improvement plan, governors' minutes, tracking data, local authority reports and questionnaires completed by 35 parents, 64 pupils and 14 members of staff.

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

- pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school and how well teaching contributes to learning, especially for more able pupils
- the effectiveness of assessment in supporting learning and driving improvements
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in raising achievement and standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of the steps taken to improve the quality and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Most classes have pupils from two year groups. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught with a group of Year 1 pupils. The headteacher has been in post for just over a term. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A high proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; most have speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils leaving or joining the school other than at the usual times is above average. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools and Activemark. There is a nursery on the school's site, which is run independently.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

At the last inspection, the school was judged to be satisfactory. Since that time, insufficient progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning through the school, extending the opportunities for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and developing the role of subject leaders. The key weakness in teaching and learning is the lack of information that staff have on pupils' progress in order to move their learning forward at a steady and consistent rate. Consequently, the work set for pupils of different ages and abilities is not matched accurately enough to their learning needs. The work set for more able pupils is not sufficiently challenging, and that for less able pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is at times inappropriate. The school does not have a clear picture of the progress made by different groups of pupils. End-of-year assessments show that a very high proportion of pupils are making inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Lesson planning, although identifying ability groups within classes, indicates that teachers do not have a sufficient understanding of the levels at which pupils need to be working in order to plan tasks accordingly. Subject leaders are not vigilant enough in their monitoring to identify and address these weaknesses. Planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage has not taken sufficient account of the different areas of learning, nor provided opportunities for children to explore and initiate their own learning, although this is now starting to be addressed. Assessments of children's learning in the Reception Year are not always accurate, and therefore do not provide a secure base for their transition to Year 1.

The school has effective safeguarding procedures. Pupils feel safe in school and appreciate a high level of pastoral care. Staff go out of their way to listen to pupils' concerns and to follow them up. High priority is given to providing support for all pupils who are vulnerable. Pupils benefit from a wide range of popular and enjoyable after school clubs and sporting activities, linked to a sports partnership. Their good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle has been recognised through national awards.

The headteacher has been at the school for just over a term. With the support of the local authority, she has quickly grasped the key areas for improvement. Nevertheless, there has not been enough time for the school to plan and carry out actions to address

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these areas. Given the weaknesses in leadership and management in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and standards, and improve the quality of teaching and learning, by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and recorded, and this information used to:
 - monitor how well pupils are doing
 - plan the next steps in learning for pupils of different ages and abilities, so that all are appropriately challenged, especially the more able.
- Develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

When pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are broadly average. However, tracking data show that in Years 3 to 5 the gains made by pupils are inadequate, especially in writing. Additional support in Year 6 helps to accelerate progress, but nevertheless achievement over time is inadequate. There is little data to show how well pupils are progressing in Key Stage 1, but assessments at the end of Year 2 show standards to be just below average. The majority of lessons recently observed jointly by the school and the local authority, at both key stages, were judged to be inadequate as pupils were making insufficient progress. In lessons observed during the inspection, progress was no better than satisfactory and at times inadequate. Too often, pupils are not fully engaged in their learning as the pace of lessons is too slow and work is not matched well enough to their learning needs. As a result, some are easily distracted from their work and lose concentration, developing poor attitudes to work and showing a lack of enthusiasm and enjoyment for the tasks they are set. The work in books is often unfinished and poorly presented, showing that pupils, especially the more able, have not been sufficiently challenged in their learning. Lower attaining groups, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are generally supported by teaching assistants in the morning, but their role tends to be supervisory rather than actively promoting pupils' learning. In one lesson observed, a teaching assistant spent most of her time managing behaviour and, as a result, the pupils made very little progress.

Where pupils enjoy activities, behaviour is particularly good. This was observed in a singing assembly where all pupils joined in very sensibly and three Year 6 pupils sang alone. Pupils have some opportunities to take part in community events, for example

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singing to senior citizens at Christmas and participating in a community allotment. The school council has yet to become fully active in suggesting, planning and seeing through school improvements.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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' expectations of the quality and quantity of work to be produced are not high enough. The work in books and lessons observed show that teachers are not planning work well enough for the range of ages and abilities in their classes. Planning is often too brief and seldom refers to the levels at which pupils need to be working or how teaching assistants are to be deployed throughout the whole of the lesson. Learning objectives are displayed, but are not always sufficiently shared or revisited so that pupils understand the purpose of their learning and can check on how well they are doing. In one lesson, however, pupils did have the opportunity to share and evaluate their work with a partner, helping them to see how improvements could be made. Pupils are regularly set targets for improvement, which are shared with their parents. However, there is little evidence that these targets are being used in lessons as a reminder to

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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pupils when doing their work. Marking infrequently provides points for improvement and seldom refers to pupils' targets. A few of the pupil questionnaires indicated that pupils felt they did not know how well they were doing in school.

The curriculum is largely based on published guidelines. It is not sufficiently adapted to meet the learning needs of all pupils, especially the more able. Opportunities are provided for pupils to study different faiths and cultures, but pupils' recognition and understanding of a multi-ethnic society is yet to be fully promoted. The school has rightly identified that it needs to develop a more creative curriculum, with links between subjects that add more relevance, purpose and interest to pupils' learning. The curriculum is well enriched with a range of clubs, themed weeks, events and visits. These include a residential visit to France where pupils are able to practise the French they have been taught in school. Pupils with specific learning difficulties are given extra support to help to meet their needs. For example, specialist links and trained staff ensure that pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties are well catered for. Initiatives such as the 'Jump Ahead' project are successful in supporting the development of physical skills in younger pupils. Some pupils are withdrawn for additional support. Short-term targets are set for them to work towards, which are mostly met, but there is little data to show the impact of this support on pupils' progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher is working sensitively with the staff in sharing information on the key areas which the school urgently needs to improve. Leaders have hitherto not identified this urgency and their role in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in the areas for which they are responsible is too limited. Monitoring of the school's performance is not rigorous enough to drive and sustain improvement in order to raise achievement and standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body carries out its statutory responsibilities well, and offers some challenge to the school on its performance, for example through asking questions about standards in writing. Nevertheless, it has not been sufficiently vigilant in its oversight to ensure that weaknesses have been addressed, due in part to the school's own weaknesses in monitoring and reporting.

The school has worked hard with good effect to engage parents and carers in their

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children's education. Initiatives such as the 'personal education review paper', which inform parents of any additional support children are receiving and how they can help, are starting to forge closer links. The school works satisfactorily to promote equality of opportunity and the engagement of all pupils in the life and learning of the school. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. An evaluation has been made and the school is taking action to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of different communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Reception with a level of knowledge and skills below that expected at this age. They have good opportunities to visit the setting with their parents or carers before starting. Parents and carers are asked to give an indication of what their children can do, and this helps identify starting points for them. Consequently, children quickly settle into the routines of their class. They behave well and quickly learn to get on with each other. The organisation of the classroom is just starting to reflect the different areas of learning, although the outdoor area is inadequately resourced. Some resources and equipment are in a poor state and do not provide a lively learning environment. New staff are now working in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Planning is at an early stage and does not yet show fully how the different areas of learning are to be addressed and opportunities provided for child-initiated learning and play. Assessment systems are starting to be introduced in order to monitor children's progress and plan future learning. Previously, these have been inadequate, with weak systems for collecting evidence of significant learning experiences. Although the leader has thoughts

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on what needs to be improved, there is currently no action plan to bring this about.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Just under a third of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Their responses are generally positive, with little disagreement on the different statements. There are positive comments on how hard the staff work, and how the school listens to their concerns, reassures and advises them, confirming the inspectors' views that pastoral care is a strength of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pells 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 116 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	56	16	39	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	56	18	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	51	19	46	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	51	18	44	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	51	20	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	51	19	46	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	56	18	44	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)	19	46	16	39	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	54	13	32	6	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	41	20	49	4	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	51	19	46	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	49	18	44	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	59	16	39	1	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



18 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pells Church of England Primary School, Lewes, BN7 2SU

Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were interesting to talk to, polite and helpful. You spoke quite enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things you take part in. Although there are some successful aspects to the school, overall it is not doing well enough and needs 'special measures'. This means it needs extra help to get better quickly. Other inspectors will visit every term to make sure that this is happening.

These are the things that the school does well.

- It makes sure that you are safe and well looked after.
- It ensures that you all know how to keep fit and eat the right things.
- It provides you with many school clubs and lots of interesting visits, including a trip to France.

We have asked the school to work on the following things now.

- It must keep a very careful check on how well you are doing so that teachers can plan work that is just right for each one of you, not too easy and not too difficult. This will help you to make better progress.
- Children in Reception need to have time to play and explore by themselves. A careful check needs to be kept on children's progress so that staff can plan the right activities to help them learn more.
- Subject leaders must check that teaching and learning in the subjects that they manage are of the highest quality.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours faithfully

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector

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