

Rotherfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114416
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	378858
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Marshall

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	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Close
Headteacher	Marianne Terry
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Marshall

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent five hours observing teaching, which included visiting 10 class lessons and a number of smaller teaching groups. In all, seven teachers were observed teaching. In addition, discussions were held with different groups of pupils, governors, the headteacher, staff members and parents and carers. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' performance and progress, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, school policies and curriculum planning documents. In addition, questionnaires from 97 parents and carers, and those from staff and pupils, were analysed.

Information about the school

Rotherfield is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. More pupils than usual join or leave the school roll during the school year. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average. The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The breakfast club operated by the school was visited as part of this inspection.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Rotherfield is a good school. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection so that now pupils achieve well, their attendance is high and their behaviour and safety are outstanding. Parents and carers are very pleased with all the school does for their children. The school is not outstanding because teaching does not always fully ensure that there is sufficient challenge for the more able pupils nor that all pupils have regular opportunities to consolidate and apply their mathematics and English skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils’ progress and their achievement from their starting points are good. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do well because care and support are good and children settle happily to their learning. Attainment is consistently above average by the time pupils leave Year 6.
- Teaching is good and continuing to improve. Teachers know pupils’ academic development well through the good use of assessment, and pupils’ progress is tracked very carefully. The good curriculum enables pupils to enjoy a range of activities that promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Occasionally, tasks planned do not fully engage pupils’ interest or provide sufficient challenge for the more able.
- Pupils’ behaviour is outstanding and pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. They thrive in the caring atmosphere. Partnership with parents and carers is excellent. Attendance is high and pupils say they love coming to school. The school’s attention to their safety means that pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have a good understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders are developing their roles well and opportunities to share best practice are being utilised. The rigorous focus of senior staff on the quality of teaching, an effective programme of staff performance review and focused staff training have successfully improved the school since the previous inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching consistently promotes pupils' outstanding achievement, especially that of the more able, by:
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to practise and reinforce their skills and learning in English and mathematics
 - providing the exciting and relevant activities, linked across subject areas, present in some lessons, for all classes.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the school with skills and knowledge that are similar to those typical for their age, but there are many variations within the small cohorts. Throughout the school, all groups of pupils achieve well and they are particularly well prepared for the next stage of their education. As the school records show, and inspection evidence confirms, all pupils, regardless of their ability, are making at least good progress. Effective organisation and careful assessments enable children to make progress quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This very good start is built upon well so that, by the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment is consistently above average or higher, reflecting good progress, including for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils' standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average, and well above average in Year 6.

In mathematics, pupils' past work and work within lessons illustrates their growing confidence in basic and more advanced number calculations and problem-solving. This was very evident in the confidence the Years 5/6 pupils showed when calculating area and perimeters. Throughout the school, the pupils' work on display and in their books clearly shows the good progress they make in basic skills although they do not always have sufficient opportunities to apply such skills in other curricular areas.

Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This stems from the high priority the school gives to meeting their needs. By ensuring consistent and high quality help from well-qualified teaching assistants wherever it is needed, the lower-attaining pupils, and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, make good progress. Any gaps between them and their peers are closed effectively.

Parents and carers expressed a high level of satisfaction in the progress their children make and are appreciative of the efforts the school makes to involve them in their children's learning. Inspection evidence fully concurs with the parents' and carers' positive views.

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Quality of teaching

Parents and carers confirm that their children are well taught. The teaching observed on the inspection was never less than good, and occasionally outstanding. In almost all lessons, there were strong elements that helped pupils to make good progress although the most able pupils were not always challenged enough.. In the large majority of cases, teachers set out clear objectives and sessions were well managed. Pupils experience a good mix of listening to the teacher, responding to questions and opportunities to discuss their work among themselves. This experience, along with excellent strategies to manage pupils' behaviour, means that pupils are attentive and display outstanding attitudes to learning. For example, in an outstanding Years 1/2 English lesson, the pupils were organised very effectively into different groups so that they were all well challenged at their own level. They concentrated very well, enjoyed using their special word of the day, and, as a result, they all made excellent progress.

Assessment procedures to check pupils' progress are thorough and have improved markedly since the previous inspection. However, this information is not always used in conjunction with the innovations in the curriculum to plan activities that consistently meet pupils' differing interests and needs, particularly those of the most able. As a result, although teaching is good overall, there are aspects of the curriculum that have still to become embedded in some year groups in order for pupils to make even better progress. This is particularly so when teaching does not offer systematic opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills in lessons other than English and mathematics. When implemented with enthusiasm, the curriculum provides effective opportunities for pupils' all-round development. This was clear in some of the literacy lessons observed during the inspection. The variety of activities and the opportunities for pupils to make their own, well-defined choices in these lessons were very good. This resulted in memorable experiences that pulled together all that the pupils had learned from their topics. However, pupils' progress, especially for the more able, slows occasionally as not all teachers harness this innovative lesson planning to the same degree.

Throughout the school, very positive relationships between staff and pupils contribute to the supportive ethos for study. As a result, the atmosphere for learning created by the whole staff is positive and caring. The impact of the school's outstanding support, guidance and care is evident in the pupils' excellent standards of behaviour and social development. Potentially vulnerable pupils, often entering the school roll later than most, coming in from other schools, are extremely well supported and the school works very effectively in partnership with a wide range of agencies to meet their needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is outstanding and all

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evidence shows that this is typical over time. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying but say there is none of any description in the school as they are 'all friends'. They are confident that if any issues or concerns around bullying did arise, they could talk to any member of staff and difficulties would be dealt with swiftly and sensitively; one older pupil observed in discussion, and all others agreed, 'The thing I like best about school is meeting my teachers in the morning.' Almost all parents and carers report that standards of behaviour in the school are high and, without exception, they agree that their children are kept very safe at all times.

Throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic learners. Pupils' high level of attendance is testament to their thorough enjoyment of school and all it offers. The school has devised a curriculum that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well and includes plenty of opportunity for pupils to work cooperatively with others. This strategy was demonstrated particularly effectively in a session where pupils in the Years 5/6 class discussed each other's work. The enthusiasm and careful thought they showed in working together in doing this were exceptional. As one boy observed, 'I know 'X' now and I really admire the way he uses high-level words, because I can remember a time when he didn't use them, and now he does.'

Pupils were keen to show how much they enjoy the responsibility of the school council. They are justifiably proud of the input they have made to influence changes. For example, pupils across the school organised and now monitor the large, and very successful, 'Play-Pod' of scrap materials used to hugely good effect every playtime.

Leadership and management

Consistent and rigorous leadership and a focus on the correct priorities have resulted in significant improvement since the last inspection, and pupils' improving achievement. The whole-school commitment to do the best for the pupils, led by the exemplary guidance of the headteacher, is clearly evident in the strength of relationships and the staff's dedication to their work. Governors bring a wide range of skills to their planning and take specific responsibilities. They challenge and ask questions. Their visits to school keep them fully aware of the school's development. School self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The school development plan focuses clearly on raising standards and teaching even further. Senior leaders have accurately identified the necessity for teachers to implement the planned curriculum changes and further enhance progress. The leaders' clear vision, pupils' consistent progress, the improvement since the last inspection and the commitment of all staff and governors indicate the school's continuing capacity to improve further.

Almost without exception, parents and carers hold the school in high regard. They commented on their children's enjoyment of learning, the way the school welcomes all children and the care shown by all staff. Inspection evidence supports these views. The good curriculum is well planned, with a focus on key areas of learning although cross-curricular links to English and mathematics are not always evident in some planning. The range of extra-curricular clubs is clearly enjoyed by the pupils.

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The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly, and links with other schools are a strong feature of the school's philosophy. The before-school care provides a supportive start to the day for pupils who participate.

Excellent attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure the highest quality of safeguarding for the pupils. This includes rigorous procedures for ensuring the care of pupils through the checks made on all adults who work in the school. Pupils' safety and well-being are paramount at all times, ensuring that the school is a very safe and supportive place to be. The senior managers, supported well by all staff, are particularly effective in tackling discrimination should it occur and in successfully endeavouring to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and across all aspects of the school's work.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rotherfield Primary School, Crowborough, TN6 3NA

I am writing to thank you all for making me so welcome when I came to the school recently. I did enjoy my visit. Yours is a good school, and I agree with what you told me, and included in your questionnaires – it is a really fun place to learn. Here is a list of some of the things that are really good.

- The school looks after you extremely well and you all make good progress in your learning.
- You all make a really good start in the Reception class.
- You behave extremely well, get along with each other and feel very safe in school. I was particularly impressed by the way you talked your learning through with each other.
- You all have very good ideas on how to make things better.
- You find lessons interesting and really enjoy school.
- The headteacher and staff manage the school well.

Even in good schools, there are some things that could be better. I have asked the teachers to make sure that they all make their lessons as exciting as the best, set you work that closely matches your interests and needs, and give you all the best opportunities to practise what you have learned already, particularly in English and mathematics. I have also asked your teachers to make sure that the most able among you are always challenged in your work as you sometimes find it too easy.

You can help by continuing to listen carefully and take note of what the teachers say so that you can all make the best possible progress in your learning.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall
Lead inspector

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