



Sedlescombe CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114522
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 279403
Inspection dates 25 May 2006 to 26 May 2006
Reporting inspector David Collard AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Brede Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Sedlescombe
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Battle, East Sussex TN33 0RQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01424 870585
Number on roll	167	Fax number	01424 870585
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Richard Maidment
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs M Ham

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sedlescombe Church of England Primary is a smaller than average school that serves its local village and, more recently, pupils from a much wider catchment area. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and all speak English as their first language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly similar to other schools.

The school is just finishing a major refurbishment project that has greatly increased the size of the buildings. During the inspection, the Years 5/6 class was moving into its new classroom.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and has the potential to improve quickly. Strong leadership is provided by the headteacher and the inspection confirms that the school has accurately evaluated its strengths and weaknesses and enabled previous weaknesses to be effectively resolved. In 2003, the school took the correct decision to raise the achievement of pupils who were in middle ability groups. As a result, nearly all pupils, who left Year 6 in the past two years, achieved the expected standards for their age. The pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are achieving average standards overall. However, because the school's records of how well pupils are doing are not always used well enough some of the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged and fail to reach their full potential. This is especially noticeable in writing. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the Foundation Stage and the rest of the school. Teaching is satisfactory overall although there are individual examples of stronger practice. Pastoral care is exceptionally good, a factor that contributed to the smooth transition following the recent disruptive building programme. Leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is good. Middle management has been strengthened and, a new staffing structure is being introduced. However, the changes are too recent to have had significant impact and, consequently, leadership and management across all levels is satisfactory rather than good. Despite many challenges, the ethos and village school atmosphere have remained very strong and pupils and parents are extremely supportive. They particularly remarked on the 'tireless efforts of the headteacher' in ensuring their children become 'all-round achievers'. As a result, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the overall standards of the more able pupils, particularly in writing.
- Develop the role of the middle managers so that they have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve the use of assessment so that the quality of teaching provides consistent challenge for all pupils, particularly for the more able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve satisfactorily through the school. Children start in the Reception class with standards that are normally expected for their age. They mix together well and quickly settle into the routines. By the start of Year 1 most are reaching at least expected standards and they make particularly good progress with their early reading skills. Since 2003, when standards in tests were too low, the school has aimed at moving as many pupils as possible up to the age expected standards. This has been successfully achieved and in 2005, standards in national tests were average for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. For many of those with learning difficulties and disabilities this represents good progress.

However, inspectors found that there are pupils capable of higher than average standards. The school has already recognised the situation and recent plans have been targeted at this group. There are already signs of success such as the improving number of higher achievers in mathematics. The same success has not yet been achieved in English, particularly writing. The reasons for this are not clear although the school's analysis of the data collected suggests that inconsistencies within teaching in the past have meant that the rates of progress have varied considerably between different classes. While this has left a legacy of underachievement, which is taking time to address, the school is showing it has the capability to deal with the problem.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Founded on Christian values, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. This begins well in the Reception class and by Year 6 pupils demonstrate mature attitudes and a strong sense of responsibility and awareness of the needs of others. These personal qualities mean they are well prepared to contribute to the school community. For example, the older pupils relish the opportunities to help during lunches and show a real caring attitude towards the younger children. Pupils show a good awareness about healthy eating, and keeping safe in physical education and when using tools in practical lessons. Additionally, participation in the school council is giving pupils an active voice in the running of the school and is helping to develop pupils' sense of responsibility. Computers link well to literacy and help prepare pupils for their later studies. However, not enough use is made of spreadsheets and other mathematically linked programs to contribute to pupils' future economic well-being.

Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school and give good reasons for this, such as the 'nice atmosphere', 'very varied education' and 'good facilities'. This is reflected in the attendance figures, which are above the national average.

In lessons and around the school, pupils behave well and demonstrate good attitudes towards their teachers and each other. In contrast, there are a number of instances where pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their written work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and behaviour is particularly well managed throughout all classes. Teaching assistants are often well deployed to help groups of pupils and particularly to support those with learning difficulties. Where teaching is at its best, as was seen in a Years 1 and 2 class, the expectations of all pupils are higher. Activities are organised imaginatively with good links made between subjects. Consequently, pupils are well motivated and are excited about their learning.

In the Reception classes, teaching is satisfactory overall. Early reading skills, particularly the linking of sounds to letters, are well taught so that children make a good start in learning to read. The teaching assistant is well deployed and effectively helps children in all parts of the lesson, including whole-class sessions being led by the teacher.

Throughout the rest of the school, teachers successfully work at linking subjects and, at best, the pupils are highly stimulated and excited by their learning. For instance, the innovative Shakespeare project undertaken by the older pupils linked many different subjects and was greatly enjoyed. However, while such activities make interesting lessons, there is a tendency to teach to the average ability levels in each group. Information gained on what pupils know and can do is not always taken account of in planning work and as a result the higher achieving pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. There are some good examples of marking in Years 5 and 6, particularly where comments are linked to pupils' targets. However, marking does not always do enough to teach pupils about taking a pride in how they present their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and stimulates a desire to learn in all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

In the Reception class, a wide range of interesting and relevant learning opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, meets children's needs adequately and contributes effectively to them settling into school life.

The curriculum has particularly strong features such as the good provision for personal development, music, art and design and physical education that is extended well through links with external agencies. The use of visits, visitors and the many extra-curricular clubs fully enriches pupils' learning and provides good opportunities for them to develop personal skills and team work. Pupils say they particularly appreciate and enjoy these. The school is now rightly targeting the activities for the more able pupils to ensure they are further challenged.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Overall, the school provides good levels of support. The quality of care shown for pupils' personal well-being is outstanding and reflects the strong Christian aims of the school and the high level of commitment of all adults towards pupils. Pupils say they feel valued and can turn to any adult if they have a problem. During the inspection there were some good examples of the younger pupils turning to their older friends for support, such as, during playground games.

Health, safety and child protection arrangements are robust and ensure that all pupils are safe. Their social and emotional development, including for those pupils in the care of the local authority and pupils identified as being vulnerable, is identified and carefully monitored and supported. Pupils are prepared for their future schooling

through the good teaching of different life skills, for example, at family lunchtimes and through charity events.

The school realises it needs to provide better academic guidance to help more pupils reach their full potential. Currently, marking does not do enough to teach them about taking a pride in how they present their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a strong lead and a clear direction to the work of the school and is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. They have tackled the most pressing problems with a sense of urgency and have been successful in raising achievement and gaining the very full support of the whole school community. However, lack of experience within the staff group and the workload created by a rebuilding project meant that, until recently, most of the developmental work had fallen on the shoulders of the head and deputy and the school was not improving as fast as it should. Now, with a more experienced teaching staff and the buildings complete, sensible plans are underway to restructure the senior management team. This will broaden the range of expertise and enable responsibilities to be devolved. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is realistic and acknowledges its strengths whilst realising that more needs to be done to ensure that all ability groups reach their potential. Financial management is shrewd and good use is made of outside grants such as the £4,000 obtained for submitting a 'Walking Bus' plan. This is now being used to provide extra resources which will enhance the school's provision. The governors are good managers of the school. Many bring a range of different skills that help provide both support and challenge. They are acutely aware of the areas that need developing so they are willing to question decisions. They have been at the core of developing the grounds and offering advice about the new leadership structure. The school has demonstrated it has the capacity to improve. It rightly acknowledges that until the leadership team is stronger and assessment is used more extensively to raise achievement that it only provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We very much enjoyed joining you in your lessons. We were sorry we did not see more of Years 5/6 but hope that you all like your new classroom. No doubt you would like to know what we have said about your school so I have included a few of the main points below.

You told us how much you enjoy school, especially the clubs and activities. There is certainly a good range of things for you to do when you are not in lessons.

The school council said that it felt you behaved well and we agree. We could see how interested you were with your studies and how well you played in the playground.

We think all the adults work extremely hard at making sure you are safe and that any troubles are dealt with quickly.

We were impressed with how well the older children looked after the younger ones, particularly during the lunch break.

We think most of you are making the progress that you should and that you will reach the standards we would expect for your age. However, we think some of you are capable of more.

Your teachers plan interesting lessons for you. We have asked your teachers to look at all the information they collect from marking your work and see if they can set activities that will make you think even harder. We know you will rise to the challenge.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked very hard to do the best for you and, from the letters we received, your parents appreciate this too. We think it would now be a good idea to share some of this workload with other teachers.

Finally, can we wish you all the best for your time in the newly rebuilt school and wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Collard Lead Inspector