



Plumpton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114410
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 289899
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Christine Huard

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Southdowns
School category	Community		Plumpton Green
Age range of pupils	4–10		Lewes BN7 3EB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01273 890338
Number on roll (school)	152	Fax number	01273 891147
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Peter Clark
		Headteacher	Robert Upton
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. It serves the communities of Plumpton and surrounding villages. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is slightly below the national average. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average, but many children have below average speaking and writing skills when they first join the Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Plumpton Primary is a good school, which has made significant improvement since its previous inspection and is successfully fulfilling the school's vision. 'Challenging every child to achieve their full potential,' shines through in the quality of academic and personal achievements. 'Encouraging pupils to be responsible, caring members of the community' is reflected through constructive links with the Church, the local elderly community as well as schools in contrasting areas at home and abroad.

Children in the Reception class receive a good start to their schooling and make good progress. Overall, standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Actions taken to improve writing have been effective, with the result that standards have risen considerably. Spelling is improving but some pupils do not always apply their knowledge of basic spelling rules and spelling mistakes are not always identified by teachers when marking. This means that improvement is not as good as it could be.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Children enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils willingly take on responsibility and told inspectors that they feel fully involved in their learning. They have a voice, making worthwhile contributions to changes in practices, for example, in modifying lunchtime arrangements. They have positive attitudes towards their work and are very keen to do well. There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and engage in collaborative activities, which will stand them in good stead for the future.

The care support and guidance for pupils are good. Pupils are very well looked after and they receive good quality support both in their learning and their personal development. The school offers a good curriculum. This has added to pupils' enjoyment of school because they are fully involved in researching their own topics, such as that on The Second World War. An excellent range of clubs and additional activities add to pupils' learning experiences.

Pupils learn effectively because teaching is good. They respond well in lessons because they are interested in what is being taught. Pupils and teachers have positive relationships and interact well. Leadership and management are good. Senior staff and governors know how well the school is doing and inspectors agree with their self-evaluation. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and his empathy with staff have ensured that strategies leading to improvements in teaching and learning, particularly in writing, have been embraced by the whole school team. The introduction of curriculum teams to lead subject areas is encouraging wider participation in school development. However, because monitoring activities are mostly undertaken by the senior leadership team, the curriculum teams do not have a full overview of how well pupils are learning in their subject areas and where they need to improve. The school enjoys the wholehearted support of parents, one of whom commented, 'We are lucky to have such a good school, I have seen it grow from strength to strength.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve spelling by reinforcing the application of spelling rules, and clearly identifying where mistakes are made in pupils' work in all subjects.
- Extend the role of curriculum teams to include the monitoring of the subjects for which they are responsible in order for them to obtain a more complete picture of how well pupils are learning and where they need to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress because there is a good understanding of their individual needs. They join Year 1 having attained many of the goals expected although progress in communication, language and literacy is slower than in other areas. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This good progress continues in Years 3 to 6. Standards in writing have improved significantly as a result of action taken by the school, but there are still some weaknesses in spelling. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, because they are very well integrated into whole class activities and tasks set for them are matched closely to their particular needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Effective care, opportunities for independence and excellent relationships ensure good personal development. The pupils love school. Their enjoyment is evident in lessons and the happy singing heard in corridors. Good behaviour helps pupils learn well, although occasionally small groups of pupils do not settle quickly enough in lessons. Pupils feel safe, they confidently told inspectors, 'People occasionally fall out but there is no bullying.' Spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Pupils are reflective and their social awareness is evident in their support for many charities. Topics effectively promote awareness of a range of world cultures and links established with a London school are helping to raise their understanding of different cultures in Britain. Pupils contribute very positively to the school, local and wider communities. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Organising school council elections and fund raising, as well as good standards of literacy and numeracy all prepare pupils well for the future. Reception children enjoy their learning. They are polite, developing confidence, and learning how to share.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn effectively because teachers are confident, have good subject knowledge and make learning interesting for their pupils. For example, a Year 6 lesson on punctuation appealed to pupils because of the teacher's timely injections of humour which enlivened the whole session. Pupils tackle tasks set with vigour and enthusiasm. They are eager to learn because they find the teaching inspiring and exciting. They respond to questions thoughtfully and are encouraged to explore and share ideas with their 'talking partners'. They think through problems carefully and are developing good independent learning skills. Marking is satisfactory. Whilst pupils are told if they have achieved the learning objective, they are not always shown what they can do to improve their work further. This is slowing the otherwise good progress that pupils are making in their writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Improving standards are the result of meeting the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Links between subjects make learning relevant, as evident in the use of technology in mathematics and science. Producing and tasting 'stir-fries,' during the Chinese New Year topic, illustrates the stimulating reception curriculum. Pupils experience a rich, creative curriculum, with a particular strength in art where exceptional work in the styles of Mondrian, William Morris and the Impressionists has been produced. A focus on writing skills, such as making sentence openers more interesting, helps to meet a school improvement target although basic spelling skills have not been emphasised enough. A well planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme contributes very well to pupils' personal development. Pupils of all ages enjoy and benefit from an outstanding range of clubs and additional activities, across the whole spectrum of interests, including cookery, sport, foreign languages and art, which help to extend their learning experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The commitment of staff and very good relationships ensure good care, guidance and support. Pupils' successes in and out of school are celebrated. There is prompt and accurate identification of particular needs with support well matched to those needs. Class teachers and teaching assistants provide good support to all pupils, and that for those with learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding. Outstanding links with specialist agencies ensure that pupils receive additional support as and when the need arises. Systems for checking pupils' academic progress are good. Older pupils know and understand their class and personal targets although younger pupils do not show such a secure understanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's good leadership and management are characterised by shared values and a clear vision for further improvement. Dedicated staff have responded energetically to the headteacher's high expectations and commitment to improved standards. A culture has been successfully established in which teachers share good practice and discuss teaching and learning in an atmosphere of mutual support. The monitoring and evaluation by senior staff have been effective in identifying areas for development, and improved outcomes for pupils have been secured. For example, pupils have made good progress in both writing and ICT skills. This shows there is a good capacity for further improvement across the curriculum. Curriculum teams now have an enhanced role they do not yet monitor their own subject areas; this means they do not have a complete overview of pupils' learning. The school improvement plan provides a very good basis for development. A committed team of governors, confidently led by the chair of governors, provide good support and challenge. The school has the confidence of the community it serves and parents are enthusiastic in their support of the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how much you enjoy your learning and all the extra activities you do. We think your school gives you a good education and is working hard to make it even better.

- What we think your school does well:
- You work hard and achieve well because you are well taught and your teachers make learning enjoyable for you.
- You behave well and are really keen to learn.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- You willingly take on responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to your school and wider communities.
- You have an exciting curriculum with lots of interesting activities.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher, senior teachers and governors lead the school well and know what must be done to make it even better.
- What we have asked the school to do to improve:
- You need more help to improve your spelling skills and we have asked teachers to show you where you make mistakes when they mark your work.
- We have asked that all teachers should be involved in checking the work of the school so that they all have a good picture of how well the school is doing.

We hope you will continue to enjoy your learning.