



St John's Meads Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 114576
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 289978
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rowsley Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Eastbourne
Age range of pupils	4–11		BN20 7XS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01323 730255
Number on roll (school)	221	Fax number	01323 412697
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Watsham
		Headteacher	Alison Flynn
Date of previous school inspection	18 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	24–25 January 2007	289978

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children's attainment on entry to Reception is wide-ranging but average overall. The socio economic circumstances of pupils are above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. A significant number of pupils enter or leave the school at times other than the normal point of entry. Most later entrants join the school between Years 3 to 6, including a small minority who are at early stages of learning English. The headteacher took up post three years ago. Since then, the school has gained Artsmark Gold, National Healthy Schools and Sports Awards. The school also holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. It provides pupils with a well rounded education which enables them to successfully develop their academic, creative, practical and sporting potential. The headteacher provides ambitious leadership. Her clear direction strikes a balance between striving for academic achievement and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. Staff work as an effective team and are committed to further improvement.

Overall provision in Reception is satisfactory. The school has rightly improved provision for this area this year, particularly for the teaching of reading, and the curriculum is now much more practically based. Children make satisfactory progress and reach the levels expected by the time they start Year 1. However, there is still work to do to improve progress for more capable children, especially in numeracy, where there is sometimes a lack of challenge.

The rate of pupils' progress accelerates as they go through the school and overall their achievement is good. By Year 2, they reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because they are given good support. Pupils' personal development, well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and relationships are good at all levels. The Christian ethos of the school makes a strong impact on these areas. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their very good attendance. Pupils feel very safe and understand how to keep healthy. The quality of teaching is generally good and lessons are often challenging. However, in Reception and Year 1, there is not always enough direct teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy, such as spelling, and this slows pupils' progress. The curriculum is good. It is broad and particularly strong in the arts and sport. It provides good opportunities for independent learning, research and problem solving. The care, support and guidance of pupils is good. Pastoral care is outstanding whilst academic assessment is good.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher runs the school well. Governors are very supportive and provide good levels of challenge. Effective procedures for monitoring and evaluation have given school leaders a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise achievement. Some successful action has been taken, for example, to improve the progress of pupils in Year 2. However, systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of new initiatives in Reception and checking provision in Year 1 are not as rigorous. This prevents the school quickly identifying and addressing any weaknesses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in Reception, especially for more capable children in mathematics, so that progress is as good as in the rest of the school.

- Strengthen the teaching of basic skills in Reception and Year 1 and improve arrangements for checking the impact on learning for these year groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall achievement is good. Their attainment on entry is broadly average and, by Year 6, they reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science.

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and reach the standards expected with some exceeding these, particularly in reading. Improvements in provision for Reception this year have improved progress. However, the progress of more capable children still occasionally slows, especially in mathematics, because some of the activities that they are given do not take account of what they already know. In both Reception and Year 1, the teaching of key skills is not always systematic during group work and this also limits pupils' achievement to some extent.

Pupils make good progress overall in Years 1 and 2. Progress is particularly good in Year 2 where pupils reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions working at the higher levels have increased. This is due to improved assessment and the setting of targets and more challenging learning opportunities for more capable pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given good support to help them catch up, especially in reading and mathematics.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress in relation to their starting points is good, including that of the many later entrants. These pupils have sometimes underachieved in previous schools but catch up well because of the support they are given. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with limited English make good progress. More capable pupils' progress is good because there is much rigorous subject teaching in these year groups. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in art and design, music and sport. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being because of their good progress in developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their very good levels of attendance. Exemplary attitudes and behaviour are the norm. Pupils say bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly.

Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and also appreciate their achievements.

Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and contribute very well to the school and local communities. The school council makes an effective contribution to the day-to-day life of the school and ensures pupils' views are represented well. Pupils raise money for charities and gain good teamwork, decision making and enterprise skills. Learners gain a very good understanding of wider social and economic issues, together with

awareness of others less fortunate than themselves. Work related to the school's quest for 'Healthy School' status has given pupils an excellent understanding of the need for safety, exercise and healthy eating. The school is now working to heighten pupils' awareness of global responsibilities by linking with, and raising money for, a school in Malawi.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall but with some variation in different year groups. In Reception, there are good opportunities for children to learn through practical activity and enquiry. However, in both Reception and Year 1, there is not always enough direct teaching of basic skills and this slows progress in aspects of literacy and numeracy, for example, in spelling. In addition, in Reception, there is not enough attention to extending the learning of more capable children, particularly in mathematics.

Throughout the school, good relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves create a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches which engage pupils' interest and deploy ICT resources well to facilitate learning. Pupils are enabled to learn successfully through listening and watching as a complete class, as well through individual and small group work and problem solving. Teaching assistants are well trained and their time is well managed so they provide good support for pupils' learning, especially in literacy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, relevant and interesting. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy in Years 2 to 6, but some weaknesses lower down the school. The enthusiasm with which pupils speak about subjects such as art and design, music and sport reflects some high quality learning opportunities and the school's success in gaining national awards for these subjects. Meaningful links are made between subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment and learning. For example, while studying Tudor England in history, a theatre visit enabled pupils to enjoy a production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and savour the language of Shakespeare. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of visits, visitors and out-of-class activities. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English is good. Gifted and talented pupils are well provided for and learning opportunities for more capable pupils are particularly strong from Years 2 to 6. Provision is enhanced through specialist teaching, some of which is provided by secondary schools, and Spanish is taught in Years 5 and 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support are outstanding and reflect fully the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils feel well looked after and are confident to approach adults if they have a problem. Procedures for child protection, together with those for health and safety, are robust. The school supports later entrants very well, helping them to settle quickly, including those who have had difficulties elsewhere and those who enter at early stages of learning English. Systems for tracking pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics, have recently been improved and are good overall. However, the school is fully aware that more rigorous checks on children's progress in Reception and Year 1 are needed. Individual targets, together with teachers' effective marking of work, give pupils a clear understanding of what they must do to improve. As one pupil explained, 'It's important to know your targets because they help you to improve.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because of the clear focus on both the academic and personal development of pupils. The headteacher has the support of governors and parents, who are positive about the broad education the school offers. The headteacher has built an effective team. There is a suitable balance between experienced teachers and the more recently trained, but all share her high expectations and work well together. Key staff make a strong contribution to pupils' achievement, especially in Years 3 to 6. Good monitoring and evaluation contribute to the consistently high standards pupils achieve by Year 6. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including an accurate picture of the quality of teaching. This has led to effective action to improve the quality of learning across the arts, sport and practical subjects as well as literacy and numeracy.

The headteacher has improved assessment systems and checks on progress have led to better provision for children in Reception. However, the school is fully aware of the need to step up checks of teaching in Reception and Year 1 to ensure that pupils' progress in learning the basics is as good as in the rest of the school. This weaker aspect of monitoring prevents school leaders and governors quickly judging whether actions taken are successful in bringing about improvements in pupils' achievement. The governing body is well organised, supportive and provides a good level of challenge. The good rate of improvement since the previous inspection, and more recent improvements in pupils' progress in Year 2 and the broadening of the curriculum, show that the school has a good capacity to continue to progress.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2
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	2
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

As you know, we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed seeing you at work and play and talking with some of you. Thank you for being so welcoming. The school gives you a good education and really helps you learn.

These are some of the good things about your school:

- You make good progress and, by the time you leave, you reach high standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- You really enjoy school and get on well with each other.
- You behave extremely well and are a credit to your school.
- Good teaching makes sure you make good progress.
- You have really interesting learning opportunities in ICT, art, music and sport.
- Teachers make sure you are cared for very well and you are kept safe.
- Your headteacher and your teachers are working hard to make the school even better.

Here are a few things we are asking the school to change:

- For those children in Reception who find learning easy, make sure that the work they are given really makes them think, especially when they do maths.
- Improve the teaching of things like spelling in Reception and Year 1 and check that new ways of doing things are really making a difference.

You can help your teachers by making sure you keep working hard at everything you do.

Thank you again for your help and for being so friendly.