



Gattons Infant School, The

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125940
Local Authority West Sussex
Inspection number 293406
Inspection date 11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Royal George Road
School category	Community		Burgess Hill
Age range of pupils	4-7		RH15 9SL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01444 235071
Number on roll (school)	246	Fax number	01444 230050
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Chris Lake
		Headteacher	Susan Davidson
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2007		

Age group 4-7	Inspection date 11 January 2007	Inspection number 293406
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Gattons is a larger than average infant school which draws its pupils from a wide variety of social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to that seen in the majority of schools, although it varies significantly from year to year. Attainment on entry to the school is also similar to that seen in most schools. Most of the pupils are of White British origin. About 10% come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Gattons is an outstanding school which fully meets its aim to 'cultivate an environment where children are happy and secure and enjoy learning'. It successfully challenges and inspires pupils to achieve their full potential and lays firm foundations for lifelong learning. One parent summed up the views of many in these words, 'A fantastic school with an excellent headteacher and wonderful staff'. Pupils' achievement is outstanding because teachers understand how children learn and provide them with a wealth of experiences that tap into their interests and enthusiasm. As a result, pupils achieve very high standards across the curriculum.

A key factor in the school's success is its unswerving focus on pupils' personal development and well-being, which are excellent. This is because they are firmly rooted in the belief that pupils will make good progress if they feel safe and secure and actually enjoy learning. First rate care, support and guidance for all pupils help them to feel confident and trusted. They blossom under the watchful eye of a dedicated team of staff who know them well and make sure that their individual needs are met. Teaching is outstanding because every adult is focused on enabling and assessing pupils' learning as it progresses. Most importantly, they make learning fun. Lessons are lively and stimulating with a strong accent on practical tasks which encourage pupils to think for themselves and take an active role in their own learning.

One of the school's most striking features is the way it encourages pupils to be independent. This begins in the Reception classes, where children get off to an excellent start and make very good progress, especially in their personal and social development. Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour, for each other's well-being and for the school and the world around them. They are proud of their healthy lunchboxes and are very committed to caring for the environment. 'Green Day' was a superb example of the pupils' response to recycling, especially the fantastic plastic carrier bag outfits they had made with the help of their parents.

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher underpins the school's outstanding leadership and management. It is reflected in the exceptional levels of commitment and excellent teamwork amongst all staff and governors. Their energetic response to new initiatives has led to a number of exciting innovations in the curriculum, which is outstanding in the way it motivates pupils and engages them in learning. The school strives always to do its very best for its pupils. This is demonstrated through the recent introduction of very good systems for setting individual targets and tracking pupils' progress throughout each year in a bid to improve pupils' achievement even further.

The school's somewhat modest view of itself is typical of its unrelenting pursuit of excellence. Accurate and insightful self-evaluation and a powerful vision for the future are key factors in ensuring that the school is very well placed to go from strength to strength.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the systems for setting targets for individual pupils and tracking their progress from term to term to enable senior staff to check that each pupil is making the best possible progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding throughout the school. The standards achieved in national tests have been significantly above average in the past two years, despite the higher than average number of pupils with learning difficulties in those year groups. Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress. Standards in reading and writing are continuing to improve in response to new initiatives in teaching phonics and reading skills. A greater focus on drama and role play is improving pupils' speaking and listening skills. This is having a positive 'knock-on' effect on the quality of their writing. Pupils are making increasingly adventurous use of vocabulary and constructing more interesting and complex sentences. The school is successfully narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' attainment in English. This has been an important focus, given the higher proportion of boys than girls in the school. Standards in mathematics have risen to exceptionally high levels in the past two years. Almost all of the pupils reach the standard expected and a very high proportion of pupils exceed it. A keen emphasis on learning through investigation and problem solving has contributed significantly to raising standards.

It is not simply in English and mathematics that pupils excel. Displays and portfolios of work illustrate the high standards achieved in subjects such as science, design and technology and art. This reflects the school's commitment to excellence in all aspects of learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Parents praise the school for the way it nurtures their children's 'all-round' development. Pupils feel safe and care for one another very well. As one said, 'It's a safe school. We help to protect each other'. Pupils have a real zest for learning and thoroughly enjoy their time in school. This is reflected in their good attendance. They quickly grow in confidence and independence and readily assume responsibilities, such as looking after the youngest children and being on the school council. Pupils have played an important role in improving playtimes by choosing new equipment. Their behaviour is exceptionally good and, for the most part, a spontaneous response to teachers' very high expectations. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They appreciate the beauty of the world around them and consider it important that they should try not to harm the environment. They are serious about recycling and composting and try hard not to waste water and electricity. Pupils

organise fund raising for charities they have selected and take part in mini-enterprise projects. All of this prepares them very well for their role in the world beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

As one parent commented, at The Gattons 'every child is treated as an individual'. Teachers tailor pupils' learning to suit the way they learn most effectively. They know their pupils very well and plan work to meet their needs, using a rich variety of methods and resources. Excellent teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants ensures that every pupil has the benefit of valuable adult support and guidance. Classrooms are visually stimulating with displays that engage pupils and extend their learning as well as celebrating their achievements. Enthusiastic and energetic teaching creates lively and interesting lessons where pupils are fully involved and enjoy learning. Frequent assessments of pupils' progress ensure that teachers plan work that builds successfully on pupils' existing knowledge and skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school is quick to adapt and modify its curriculum in the light of current research and in response to national and local initiatives. The impact of recent improvements is already evident in the high and still rising standards in English and mathematics. A determination to place equal value on all aspects of the curriculum ensures that it is exceptionally well balanced and responsive to pupils' needs and interests. This also results in pupils achieving high standards across a range of subjects. A creative approach to planning has successfully produced a seamless blending of subjects around central themes. This excellent practice begins in Reception and is built upon throughout the school. All year groups make very effective use of the outside environment to enhance pupils' learning. Excellent personal and social development equips pupils very well to meet future challenges. The high priority placed on healthy lifestyles and environmental awareness contributes significantly to pupils' all-round development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils feel safe, secure and happy because of the excellent care and support they receive from all adults. The pupils' well-being is at the heart of every decision, and all adults show the pupils that they value their ideas and their efforts. Excellent links with support agencies enhance the school's outstanding provision for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. Class, group and individual targets guide pupils by showing them how to improve their work and behaviour. As one pupil put it, 'They help you practise things and get better'. Pupils are encouraged to assess how well they have

understood new ideas, and this helps teachers to provide additional support for those who seem unsure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Staff, governors and parents are unanimous in their appreciation of the headteacher's many outstanding qualities. She has built a high achieving team of staff who all contribute successfully to leading aspects of the school's development. Year group and subject leaders ensure consistency of approach and drive improvements in teaching, learning and the curriculum. First-rate leadership of the Foundation Stage and the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are key features of the school's excellent provision. Governors, too, are outstanding in the way they both challenge and support the management team. Rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school by staff and governors ensures that actions are taken promptly to tackle identified areas for improvement. A recent focus on boys' achievement resulted from a thorough analysis of pupils' attainments. This has led to a marked improvement in boys' achievement in reading and writing. Although not yet fully established, the introduction of new systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets for individual pupils to achieve by the end of the year is an indication of the school's drive to raise pupils' achievement in every year group even further.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

I had a super time when I visited your school, mostly because I really enjoyed spending time with you, talking to you and looking at your work. Thank you for being so helpful and for making me feel welcome. I was very impressed with your behaviour and by the way you work really hard in your lessons. Well done! I could see how much you enjoy being at school and how well you all look after each other. I thoroughly enjoyed 'Green Day' and was amazed at some of the outfits you created out of plastic carrier bags.

The Gattons is an excellent school. Here are some of the reasons why:

- You achieve very high standards in your work and make excellent progress.
- The teachers expect you to work hard and behave well and they make learning fun for you.
- They know exactly how well you are doing and give you targets that help you to improve.
- You learn about many exciting topics in ways that you enjoy.
- You are particularly good at keeping healthy – I saw some very healthy lunchboxes and was pleased to see that a lot of you walk to school.
- You take excellent care of the environment by recycling and composting and not wasting water or electricity.
- All of the adults look after you really well and give you lots of opportunities to be independent and take responsibility.

The adults who run the school do an excellent job and are always looking for ways to make it even better. They have started a new system to show how much progress you are making towards your targets each year. I have asked them to make this system even better to check that you are all making as much progress as you possibly can.

Keep up all the good work and enjoy your time at The Gattons.