



# Herons Dale Primary School

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 126169  
**Local Authority** West Sussex  
**Inspection number** 296418  
**Inspection dates** 16–17 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Michael Megee

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Hawkins Crescent
<b>School category</b>	Community		Shoreham-by-Sea
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		BN43 6TN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 596904
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	54	<b>Fax number</b>	01273 591126
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Susie Pickett
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Sally Pritchard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 October 2000		

---

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 16–17 October 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 296418
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Herons Dale School serves the town of Shoreham and the surrounding area. At the last inspection, it was an all-age special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Following a local authority (LA) reorganisation, as from September 2006 it provides for pupils of primary age, as well as a very small number of children in the Foundation Stage age range, with the full span of learning, behavioural, physical and sensory difficulties. It has retained most of the staff, including the headteacher and senior managers. More than a third of the pupils have autism. There are five times as many boys as girls, and almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Herons Dale School provides a satisfactory standard of education, supported by a good standard of care, guidance and support. As one very satisfied parent wrote, 'When my daughter started school, she couldn't walk, talk and only ate baby food. The school has helped her in all three ways. She now runs around, talks, sings and signs, and loves eating the school dinners'. The school assesses its overall effectiveness as good but the inspection shows that important aspects of the school, including pupils' achievement, learning and teaching, are satisfactory rather than good.

Staff care greatly about each pupil, and offer timely advice and assistance. In this way, they successfully cultivate the pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils really love coming to school, and they keep themselves very healthy as they throw themselves enthusiastically into the very good range of physical activities on offer. They make very healthy choices in what they eat, and pupils tell you, 'Lettuce is good for you'.

The massive changes in the last two years have meant that many pupils have moved between classrooms and buildings five times in the last year alone. With virtually the same personnel in post, the school now provides for much younger pupils with very different, more complex educational needs and with exceptionally low standards when compared to national averages. Teachers have had to readjust considerably in order to take full account of the unfamiliar range of needs which the pupils present. There are some residual weaknesses in the setting and promotion of suitable individual targets and in the teaching of mathematics. This has meant that pupils are not able to develop fully the basic skills they will need in the future. The pupils benefit from a good curriculum, with very good opportunities to participate in the arts. A few pupils, but not enough, have the opportunity to attend mainstream schools, which gives their academic and social development a good boost.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher enjoys very good relationships with the parents, who speak highly of her and her team. The governors are supportive of the school but they and the school recognise that they need to develop more fully their role as 'critical friends'. The senior managers have worked hard to keep the school on an even keel during a very demanding period; however, the school has not managed to retain an accurate view of what improvements are necessary, for example through observing teaching, and this has impaired its ability to advance as fast as it should.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in respect of self-evaluation and monitoring is inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days' notice of such a visit.

## What the school should do to improve further

- raise achievement in mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching in the subject
- ensure that every teacher's performance is formally and regularly evaluated so that good practice can be spread
- ensure that all pupils have challenging and suitable individual targets that are promoted throughout the day, and which are regularly reviewed.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils attending the school have a wide range of learning difficulties and educational needs. This means that, when compared with national averages, standards are exceptionally low throughout the school, although achievement is satisfactory. The school provides good personal support and encouragement, which gives pupils the confidence to try their best and not be anxious about failing. However, there are weaknesses in the way that individual targets are used, which slows down achievement. In English, science and the arts, achievement is good, but results in mathematics are not as good they could be.

Parents say how delighted they are with the progress that their children make at the school. One parent said, 'My child's speech has gone through the roof since he began at Herons Dale'. Another said, 'I couldn't believe it when my son came home and announced that he wanted a pizza for tea, and he would show me how to make one. He's never cooked anything before. It was delicious'.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are extremely happy at the school. When a group of pupils was asked what they liked doing most, they cited many aspects: 'I love art – I'm very arty', 'Reading, especially the Bear and the Picnic Lunch', 'I love doing numbers'. The pupils enjoy the physical activities they are offered, especially, they say, 'jogging, swimming and yoga'. Pupils attend well, and they are well behaved. Parents say that they notice a big difference in their children's attitude to learning, especially when they have come from another school: 'My daughter was excluded from a mainstream school when she was five. Herons Dale has been the best school for her. She enjoys going, and has learned so many things, including how to be sociable. She is now a very happy girl'. The small groups and good staffing ratio make pupils feel safe and act responsibly. There is a little bullying, but when it does happen, it is quickly dealt with.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well known for their cheerfulness and good manners in their own local community. They take on responsibilities within the school, such as carrying the register to the office, although the school council, which could enable them to express their views as a group more effectively, is not yet up and running. The first meeting is planned for later this term.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate effectively in the classrooms and know what makes each pupil tick. The adults continually provide good role models to the pupils on how to maintain politeness, courtesy and harmony. This results in calm and productive lessons in which pupils are well behaved and ready to learn. There is effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), especially interactive whiteboards, to assist learning. Teachers are beginning to get to grips with the wider range of educational need within the classes, although many are still on a learning curve, and this has slowed down pupils' progress. Teaching is effective in English and science, but in mathematics the work is not always appropriate for all the pupils. Some teachers are still struggling to set suitable targets, especially for pupils with the more severe learning difficulties, and to ensure these are reinforced at every opportunity.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Pupils are offered a good range of subjects and activities, which they enjoy very much. The school does particularly well in its provision for the arts. As well as music and art lessons, pupils have the opportunities to do dance and drama, play the recorder or sing in the choir. Although there are not many individual opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream schools, the school makes good use of its links with other schools and organisations to enhance what is on offer. For example, pupils play cricket at a local grammar school, participate in local dance festivals, and dress up for a children's street parade in Brighton. Pupils with profound learning difficulties are fully integrated into the regular classes within the school, and they have additional access to a good sensory curriculum delivered by a specialist teacher. Pupils with autism also enjoy good specialist teaching and distinct well-structured resources which match their needs well.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pupils receive effective professional care and support from a good range of staff, including an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and school nurse. These specialists work very well with the classroom staff and parents or carers in the interests of the pupils. Essential information is efficiently transferred through formal reports as well through discussions at the school gate, in corridors or through the daily home-school diaries.

All the adults in the school have the pupils' well-being at heart. From the very start, the school rapidly establishes a strong partnership with parents, and this relationship is at the core of the school's success in promoting pupils' welfare and care. One parent said, 'All the staff are very generous with their time. My daughter is always sad when

the school has holidays, but the headteacher opens her house to the pupils during the summer, so the children can be together and play with the chickens there'.

The school has thorough procedures for health, safety and risk assessment, including child protection and security checks on staff. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own personal targets alongside teachers. This means that they may not know what their targets are, or what they need to do in order to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school has undergone huge changes over the last year or two and the staff and governors have worked hard to maintain a satisfactory standard of education without disrupting the pupils' personal development. The buildings are nearly finished, and the school community is already reaping the benefits of the extra space, and the light, pleasant classrooms and specialist areas. The headteacher regards this as a new beginning for the school, and all staff, parents and pupils share her commitment, even though starting again virtually from scratch, to make the school even better than before.

Whilst attention has been focused largely on the buildings and keeping morale high amongst pupils and staff, the school has not been able to sustain really good systems for monitoring and evaluating its own performance. The school does not have all the necessary information that it needs, particularly about teaching and learning, in order to take rapid steps forward. It is, therefore, not sufficiently able to demonstrate its capacity to improve. The school has recognised this and has plans, due to be realised this term, to ensure that all staff are fully involved in the process of monitoring and evaluating its work.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
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	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
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	3

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 meeting with me and for helping me with the inspection. This is what I found out about your school:

- you told me very clearly how much you love coming to school
- your parents are glad that you have staff who care a lot about you, and want to see you do well
- you get on well with the staff, who help you make progress, but they need to make sure you have good targets and to help you to achieve them through the day
- your behaviour and attendance are good
- you told me lots about how to stay healthy (especially about how good lettuce is for me) and you make very good choices in what you eat (but watch out for potatoes with a 50p coin in them!)
- you make satisfactory progress in your lessons, although your progress in maths could be better
- there are not enough checks made to see how well teachers are doing, and how well you learn.

Do you remember you told me your ideas for making the playground more interesting, with new swings and skipping ropes? That was a really good idea. When you have your school council, make sure you tell the staff all your good ideas about how to make the school even better.

Good luck for the future.