

Seaford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114419
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311593
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Anderson
Headteacher	Jonathan Reynard
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Wilkinson Way Seaford BN25 2JF
Telephone number	01323 893450
Fax number	01323 898594

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils join this large school with generally average capabilities. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties. There is extended provision for pupils aged 8 and over before and after school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Seaford is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has a number of good features. Parents comment on how much the school has improved in recent years. One said, 'The school has improved tenfold!' School leaders have certainly been successful in creating a positive climate for learning where pupils are very well looked after and made to feel secure. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. They help and get on very well with each other and their behaviour is mostly very good. A parent voiced the views of many, describing the school as 'a happy, safe place where my daughter can enjoy her learning and enjoy being a child'.

After a good start in the Reception Year, pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 so that they attain standards in the Year 2 assessments that have been consistently above average. Where the school has been less successful is in fully capitalising on that progress in Years 3 to 6. Results in the Year 6 national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have been average. This means that pupils' achievement is only satisfactory overall. This is because there has not been as much consistently good teaching in the junior years as in the infants. With effective monitoring and support from the headteacher and leadership team, this picture is improving, but there are still some lessons that lack pace and where pupils' initially keen attentiveness wanes when they have to sit passively listening for too long. Teaching assistants often provide pupils with very well focused support, particularly for those who need extra help in their learning, but some teachers do not utilise teaching assistants to best effect during whole-class introductions, so that for much of this time they are just passive observers.

School leaders have identified that mathematics is the subject where there has been greatest fluctuation in standards. Greater emphasis has been given this year to better developing mental mathematics skills, and this is having a positive effect, but these sessions are not always made relevant to the pupils by linking them to what else is being learnt. Sometimes the mental mathematics work is too easy for the pupils.

The sheer breadth of the curriculum is one of the features of the school that is greatly appreciated by pupils and their parents. As one commented, 'My son always comes home and talks about the interesting things he has done at school.' This is certainly not a school that just concentrates on the core subjects to the exclusion of all else. Music and physical education are especially strong. There are high rates of participation in the impressive range of after-school sports clubs, and the prominence given to music is exemplified by the fact that every Year 5 pupil is taught to play the guitar.

The headteacher, leadership team and governors have focused much effort on raising parents' confidence and, through that, pupil numbers. Their success is evident in the supportive comments from parents, who describe the school as 'going from strength to strength', and in the steady rise in pupil numbers. School leaders have a very clear picture of how well each pupil is doing, enabling them to focus support for any at risk of falling behind. As a result, they have felt able to set very ambitious targets for this year. School leaders know well the school's many strengths and those areas that could be improved. This, and the school's successes, show its good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress so that, by the end of the Reception Year, most are working securely within the early learning goals expected of children of this age. Parents are particularly pleased at how 'welcoming and approachable' staff are. One wrote to say, 'I was impressed by the efforts made to welcome pre-school children before they started in Reception with teddy bears' tea parties, singing lessons and visits round the classrooms; it really helped my daughter to settle in.' Staff work very well together as a team to provide a rich environment that stimulates children's enthusiasm to learn. Children interact well with each other and they work both independently and in groups. Their increasing knowledge and confidence are demonstrated in the quality of their responses which show, for example their developing awareness of numbers, and in their use of information and communication technology (ICT).

What the school should do to improve further

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- Increase the pace of learning in Years 3 to 6 by making sure that pupils are not expected to listen passively for too long and that teaching assistants are used more effectively during whole-class teaching.
- Ensure that work to improve pupils' mental mathematics skills is made relevant and provides them with appropriate challenge.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils build well on their good start in Foundation Stage and make good progress in Years 1 and 2 to reach standards that are above average. Achievement is satisfactory overall, however, because pupils do not make such rapid progress in Years 3 to 6. Results in the Year 6 tests have been average. Results in mathematics have particularly fluctuated from year to year. School leaders have identified this as being due to weaknesses in pupils' mental mathematics skills. There are signs that efforts made to improve these skills are beginning to yield fruit, although, in some classes, the work in mental mathematics is not as well matched as it could be to what pupils need to learn. Pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Pupils with mostly moderate learning difficulties benefit from good support, which helps them to make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school because, as one child explained, 'It's fun and we really enjoy it here!' The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils feel valued because they know that adults have their best interests at heart. Pupils are keen to learn and are attentive in lessons, but their concentration drifts when teachers' introductions go on for too long.

Pupils work and get on very well together and respect the feelings of others. They respond very positively when given responsibility, for example as members of the school council. Pupils

say they feel safe and they learn how to keep safe, thanks in part to the school's good links with outside agencies, including the emergency services. They have a very clear understanding of the importance of staying healthy. Pupils have a strong sense of community and are keen fundraisers for many good causes. Community links are strong, both locally and globally, with the school being linked with a school in Nairobi. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers get on well with their pupils, and classes are managed well so that behaviour is very good. Teachers in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 are generally the most successful in harnessing pupils' enthusiasm for learning, and it is in these classes where pupils make the most rapid progress. There is much good teaching too in Years 3 to 6, but there are still a number of lessons where the pace of learning slows because teachers talk for too long, making it difficult for some pupils to sustain their concentration. Though teaching assistants are often very well used, particularly to help pupils with moderate learning difficulties, teachers do not always make the best use of this valuable resource during whole-class teaching. Often, teaching assistants could be doing more to support the teacher, for example by recording which pupils are signalling that they do not fully understand.

Teachers are increasingly making use of laptops and data projectors as tools for learning, but often these are used largely like overhead projectors rather than in creating a memorable interactive learning experience for the pupils. Several parents say that pupils in the older classes do not have enough regular homework matched to pupils' capabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum which includes extensive music and sports, both during the school day and through the impressive array of well attended after-school clubs. Subjects are integrated well together so that pupils apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills through the work they do on their 'learning adventures' through a range of topics that the pupils describe as 'interesting and exciting'. The school is well resourced and good displays create an attractive learning environment for the pupils. All classes have use of laptops and interactive whiteboards, but ICT is not always used as effectively as it could be. Opportunities are missed, for example, for pupils and teachers to use whiteboards interactively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents reserve particular praise for the high quality of welfare support that the school provides. Several commented on 'the positive, caring attitude amongst all the staff'. Child protection procedures are robust, as are those for health and safety. Rules and requirements for checking staff and visitors are fully in place. The school's good procedures for monitoring attendance have resulted in notable improvements. The school's good tracking systems give staff a clear picture of how well each child is doing and enable school leaders to put in place extra support where pupils are at risk of falling behind. There are exceptions, but marking mostly gives pupils

good guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils generally know and refer to their targets, but these do not always identify sharply enough the next steps in pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, governors and leadership team have together been successful in enhancing the school's reputation in the local community. This has helped to steadily increase pupil numbers, helping in turn to reverse the school's historic budget deficit. Parents recognise the improvements in the school and praise its 'committed team and good leadership'. They value the accessibility of staff and the good communication that the school has established with them, including through an attractive and informative website.

School leaders have been very effective in creating a school where pupils feel happy and are eager to learn. Perceptive monitoring of lessons, appropriately focused on pupils' learning, is helping to improve the quality of teaching, so that there is now a higher proportion of good teaching in Years 3 to 6 as well as in the younger classes. Moves to raise standards in mathematics are already having a positive effect, although school leaders acknowledge that there is further to go in ensuring teachers pitch the mental mathematics sessions at the right level and keep them relevant to the other work pupils are doing.

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.

Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Seaford Primary School, Seaford, BN25 2JF

Thank you for making us so welcome when the other inspectors and I came to visit your school. I am writing to tell you what we found. Yours is an improving school. It is giving you a satisfactory education, and the school has lots of good features.

The school takes very good care of you, and a number of you told us how safe and secure you feel. We were very pleased to see how well behaved you are and how well you get on with each other. You told us how important it is to eat healthy food and exercise regularly, and we could see that many of you follow your own advice and take part in lots of active sports. One of the things that most impressed us about Seaford was the very wide range of clubs and other activities that so many of you take part in. Apart from the sports, music is very strong too. It was impressive to see that everyone gets the chance to learn an instrument.

You do well in the Reception Year and in Years 1 and 2, but you have not generally made as much progress in Years 3 to 6. We think one of the reasons is that sometimes some of you lose concentration when you have to listen to your teachers for too long before getting on with other learning activities. This is one of the points we have asked the school to improve. The teaching assistants do a good job in supporting those of you who need extra help, but we have asked the school also to look at ways of making better use of their time when the teacher is talking to the whole class.

Many of your parents told us that they thought the school is well run, and we agree. We were pleased to see that your headteacher and other school leaders have spotted that you need to improve your mental maths. You have been doing more mental maths this year, and we could see that this is already helping to raise standards, but we think this could be improved further if teachers all made sure that the mental maths activities linked either to what you were learning in maths or in other subjects in your 'learning adventure'. We also want them to make sure that the mental maths activities are not too easy for you.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and doing your best.

Best wishes Selwyn Ward Lead inspector