

# Little Ridge Community Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114481
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311620
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	425
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Clarke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tom Collins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Little Ridge Avenue St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 7LR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01424 752266
<b>Fax number</b>	01424 755686

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves a predominantly White British population and has a small percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but the number holding statements of special educational needs is high because the school incorporates a unit for about 10 children with speech and language disorders. Other identified needs relate mainly to specific learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties. The school is a member of an Excellence Cluster working in partnership with a group of other schools with the aim of improving achievement. An external provider runs after school care. The school holds Healthy School, Activemark and Travel Plan awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Little Ridge has a realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the inspection confirms the school's evaluation that it provides a satisfactory quality of education. The school has many strengths recognised by the overwhelming majority of its parents. Many parents speak highly of the school's warm ethos, with comments such as, 'The word community in the school's name describes the atmosphere here perfectly.' Pupils reflect, 'We're like a big family, we know each other well.' Parents comment particularly on the good curriculum, with its rich and varied experiences which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school and their learning.

Most children enter the Reception classes with skills similar to those expected for their age. Good provision means that children develop well socially and acquire the early learning skills to give them a good basis for Year 1 work. Satisfactory teaching enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily from Year 1 to Year 6. They reach standards in line with national averages in the Year 2 and 6 national assessments. Some teaching does not provide pupils with sufficient challenge, and in some lessons, activities do not move the learning forward quickly enough. Pupils' academic progress is checked regularly and action taken quickly if a pupil begins to fall behind, but teachers' marking does not routinely identify how work could be improved. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are assessed very carefully and the additional provision made for them is effectively enabling these pupils, together with those who speak English as an additional language, to make good progress.

The school's emphasis on a 'community that learns together, grows together' is reflected in good quality care and guidance which has a positive impact on pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils are well behaved, polite and socially aware. Provision for personal, social and health education effectively gives pupils a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and many are enthusiastic in putting this into practice by attending a wide range of sports activities. Pupils act sensibly around the school because they have a good understanding that rules are made to keep them safe. Although attendance is above average, unauthorised absence is above average because of the number of parents taking children on holiday during term time.

The headteacher gives a clear sense of direction and purpose to the school and has created an atmosphere where everyone feels valued, cared for and respected. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Good self-evaluation, however, is enabling the school to address its identified weaknesses successfully, for example in improving standards in mathematics and boys' writing. Good plans are in place to strengthen subject leadership so that effective practice can be shared more widely. Staff work very closely with a wide range of external groups and agencies, including other local schools, to enhance the curriculum and encourage professional development, which bring new approaches into the school.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children in the Reception classes are happy, and have positive and trusting relationships with adults because of the good induction arrangements when they join the school. Children make good progress across all areas of learning because staff know them well and plan activities to meet their needs effectively. The introduction of a new phonics programme this year has been very successful and children have developed the early skills of reading and writing well. Children

have a good balance of adult-led activities and opportunities to explore their own interests. Some of the approaches to making learning stimulating and relevant are being developed further through the school. The outside play areas are used when possible and, as part of a whole-school initiative to enhance the grounds as outdoor classrooms, the school is ready to implement its plans to give children better outdoor opportunities to extend their learning further in the coming year.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching and learning and raise pupils' attainment by making sure that all lessons have sufficient challenge and move learning forward rapidly.
- Raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve by making sure that marking always identifies how work can be improved.
- Implement plans to enable middle managers to disseminate best practice more effectively.

A small proportion of 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**

Standards in national assessments in Year 2 are broadly in line with national averages but vary from year to year, reflecting the differing capabilities and learning difficulties in each year group. Following a significant rise in attainment in the Year 6 tests after the last inspection, standards have remained close to national averages for the last three years. Satisfactory progress is made by pupils from their starting points in Year 1. This prepares them satisfactorily for their secondary education and future lives. The school fell short of its performance targets in 2007, but school data suggest that it is likely to meet them this year. The school is using new national guidance well to change its approach to the teaching of mathematics and English. This year a focus on making mathematics more relevant by developing pupils' problem-solving skills has resulted in significant improvements, particularly for older pupils. An emphasis on broadening writing opportunities has helped boys to reach higher standards over the last two years.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils mature as they move through the school and by the time they transfer to secondary school, they are confident, able to express their views clearly, and to listen to and respect the views of others. Older pupils have a real sense of the importance of setting a good example to the rest of the school, often by taking on responsibilities which help the day-to-day running of the school. School council members are enthusiastic about the contribution they make, for example, by making suggestions for playground improvements and introducing peer mediation. Pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is good, partly because of the school emphasis on personal and social education. Aspects of the curriculum 'Learning Journeys' and a strong link with a school in Sierra Leone provide pupils with good opportunities to develop and explore ethical issues and cultural diversity.

Pupils behave well in lessons and their good attitudes to learning are reflected in the careful way they listen to the contributions of others. They cooperate with each other well, but are also able to work independently. In response to concerns raised by parents, the school responded

quickly to a growing number of bullying incidents last year and revised its procedures for encouraging good behaviour. Pupils now feel that any incidents of bullying and harassment are taken very seriously and dealt with successfully so that they are now a rare occurrence. Pupils have good strategies for avoiding bullying and know well how to stay safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and adopt healthy lifestyles. They appreciate the wide range of sports opportunities they are given.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. The school has worked hard to develop consistent, high quality planning and teachers plan work effectively in year teams. Pupils' work is well presented and they are encouraged to develop a range of recording strategies, for example for investigative work. Teachers use some good strategies for pupils to evaluate their own work. While marking gives pupils a clear idea of what they have achieved, it does not always give them enough information about what they have to do to reach higher standards. In some lessons, questioning expects only simple one-word answers, so that some pupils are not challenged enough to move learning forward quickly. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to enhance learning, for example when pupils construct spreadsheets, using animation and programming robots. Teachers manage their classes consistently well and this ensures that pupils with potentially challenging behaviour are interested in their work and do not interrupt others.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is broad and balanced and, because it is reviewed regularly and changed to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, makes an important contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school. The 'Learning Journeys' are clearly planned and include well-devised links across subjects to make learning relevant. Pupils appreciate that they have an input into how the 'journey' will be developed. These exciting experiences and using ICT as a tool for research or to present their learning help pupils to enjoy their learning well. The school has particular strengths in art, as seen in the bright and lively learning environments, and in performing arts, where, for example in music pupils have opportunities to learn to play a range of instruments. Pupils are enthusiastic about the many visits, including residential activities, and visitors to the school. These enrich pupils' learning well. Events such as Chinese Day and the Victorian Roadshow are a great success and add to the richness of pupils' experiences. Some curriculum developments are relatively recent, for example revised approaches to literacy and numeracy, and are only just beginning to impact on pupils' achievement.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Procedures for safeguarding pupils, including child protection, are securely in place and are regularly monitored and updated. Pupils say they 'feel safe at this school' and 'teachers are always around if you need help'. The vast majority of parents confirm this. The school's commitment to being an inclusive school is reflected in the good quality of its pastoral support, especially for vulnerable pupils. Good use is made of external agencies to provide advice, training

and additional expertise. Support for pupils with speech and language difficulties, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language is monitored closely and tailored carefully to meet their needs, enabling them to play a full part in lessons and make good progress.

Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and used to set targets for all pupils. As the school gains further experience in using this information, it is setting increasingly challenging targets and is having some success in achieving these. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and encouraged to support them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Management procedures effectively ensure that day-to-day organisation is good and routine practices are followed consistently. Regular and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is undertaken and the steps taken to address identified weaknesses have resulted in improved practice. Subject leaders monitor the effectiveness of their subjects through for example work samples, discussions with pupils and evaluation of teachers' planning. However, the school rightly identifies increasing opportunities for subject leaders to share best practice as an area for improvement.

Effective monitoring leads to accurate and realistic self-evaluation, and staff have a clear understanding about how to improve the school further. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and keep themselves well informed so that they have the knowledge to discharge their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. Governors provide support and encouragement for staff and are developing their role in challenging academic standards. The school seized the opportunity to join the 'Making Good Progress' pilot initiative and, together with training undertaken by staff, gives the school a good capacity to improve further. The school is already showing that when it takes action to address weaknesses, it successfully raises pupils' achievements significantly, for example in mathematics and boys' writing over the last two years.

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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?	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 <sup>1</sup> 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	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 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	2
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

<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.

## Annex A

**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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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

4 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Little Ridge Community Primary School, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 7LR

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed hearing about the things that happen in the school. The school gives you a satisfactory education and has many strengths. Here are some of them.

- You enjoy school and the range of activities planned for you, particularly the 'Learning Journeys'.
- You work well in lessons and know that adults help you when needed.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start.
- You behave well and this helps the school to be a happy place.
- You understand how to stay healthy and you are lucky to have so many sports clubs to attend.
- Adults take good care of you and you know exactly what to do if you have a problem.
- Many of you take on responsibilities, such as school council members, and this helps the whole school community.
- The headteacher and the staff think very carefully about how well the school is doing and take action quickly if they think something needs improving.

We have asked your school to do three things that we think will help you to make faster progress.

- Make sure that the work you have to do is challenging and always helps you to learn something new.
- Make sure that when your work is marked you are given clear explanations about how to improve it further.
- Ensure that subject leaders have opportunities to share with other teachers the ways that will help you most with your learning.

You can help by continuing to do your best and not giving up when the work is hard. Please thank your parents or carers for returning the questionnaires. It was helpful to hear what they think about the school. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector

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