

Midhurst C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125988
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315382
Inspection dates	11-12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Pollitt

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	171
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Marcus Ronchetti
Headteacher	Mr Kenneth Ford
Date of previous school inspection	January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	NA
School address	Ashfield Road Midhurst GU29 9JX
Telephone number	01730 813526
Fax number	01730 817233

Age group	4-10
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Midhurst Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-sized school, and serves the town and the local community. The number of pupils has fallen over the last few years. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. For the last two years, the school has been involved in discussions about reorganisation within the local area, including a proposed amalgamation with a village primary school, a change to the age of transfer from 10 to 11, and a proposed academy. The school has links with a school in Gambia.

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at the start of the Reception year.

There is childcare provision on the school site which is not managed by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Strengths in pastoral care and good partnership with others, both locally and internationally, contribute much to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Written comments from parents, such as 'teachers are approachable, willing to listen to concerns, and able to offer practical help or give reassurance,' show that most appreciate the commitment and friendliness of the staff. The curriculum is satisfactory and offers particularly good opportunities in music and art. The outcomes can be seen in happy pupils who enjoy their lessons, behave well, feel safe and get on well together. They enjoy exercise and have a good understanding of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles.

Academic achievement is satisfactory. Children enter school with skills expected for their age. They settle quickly and achieve well in the Reception year in all areas of learning. This is because provision and teaching are good and progress is carefully tracked to help teachers plan activities that motivate and challenge children of different abilities. In Years 1 to 5, teaching and learning are satisfactory but variable, with the result that pupils' progress is inconsistent as they go through the school. In Years 1 and 2, boys and higher attaining pupils do not always do as well as they could because work does not sufficiently motivate or challenge these pupils. As a result, standards at the end of Year 2 are below average. Pupils in Years 3 to 5 make better progress due to more consistent teaching. By the end of Year 5 standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the help given by teaching assistants and make similar progress to their classmates.

Parents and their children have great respect for the headteacher. As one parent commented, 'My children respect his discipline and enjoy his praise and sense of humour.' He provides satisfactory leadership and has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He recognises that standards could be higher and has recently implemented training in assessment to enable all teachers to take more responsibility for standards across the school. A recently extended senior management team involves more teachers in monitoring the school's performance to bring about improvement. However, monitoring and evaluation arrangements lack a specific focus on the need to raise all teaching to that of the best and so eradicate the variability in the learning of pupils. Improved assessment procedures provide teachers with more detailed information about the progress of individual and specific groups of pupils. The school acknowledges that better use of this information is necessary to plan lessons more carefully so that work can be more closely matched to pupils' individual needs. The governing body, including new members, is involved in the day-to-day life of the school, and in key evaluation exercises. However, governors are not yet asking challenging questions about the school's performance.

The initial impact of the extended management team and the implementation of robust systems for tracking and assessment demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity for further development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's achievement is good. Great emphasis is placed on promoting personal, social and emotional development and children make particularly good progress in these aspects of their learning, and in speaking and listening. They work happily with others and respond very enthusiastically during class discussions. Children thoroughly enjoy the many imaginative activities that are organised extremely well. Their behaviour is calm and purposeful. Staff make good use of opportunities for children to explore and learn through play. Independent activities are balanced carefully with those that adults direct. All adults know the children well and early assessments quickly identify those who need additional support.

Good leadership is reflected in the way that staff regularly assess children's progress to ensure that teaching and the curriculum fully meet their needs. Recent developments in the teaching of calculation are already resulting in good progress in this area, particularly for higher attaining children. Early reading activities, including phonic work and the involvement of parents to support learning at home, help children get off to a flying start in this area.

Provision in the EYFS has significantly improved since the last inspection with the development of a well designed outside area. However, this area is not always used as well as it could be to provide opportunities for child-initiated play

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Years 1 and 2, by ensuring that activities capture the interest and imagination of boys and higher attaining pupils and challenge them to do their best.
- Improve the use of assessment data to plan lessons that take account of the needs of all pupils.
- Extend the role and responsibilities of senior leaders and governors so that they play a full part in the rigorous monitoring of school performance.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Following children's good start in the EYFS, the rate of progress across Years 1 to 5 is more mixed and such that achievement as a whole is satisfactory. The school does not yet always do as well as it should for all pupils in Years 1 and 2. As a consequence, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average at the end of Year 2. This is because some higher attaining pupils and boys do not reach their full potential. The rate of progress improves in Years 3 to 5 and pupils make up some lost ground. As a result, standards are average by the end of Year 5.

Throughout the school, the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are clearly identified and targets are appropriate to address these needs.

These pupils make satisfactory progress over time, but in some lessons work is not adapted sufficiently to enable them to succeed at the tasks they are given.

Satisfactory academic achievement and a sound understanding of the use of information and communication technology (ICT), along with good personal skills, mean that pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of education and later life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' positive attitudes and their friendly relationships with each other and with adults make it obvious that they enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory and the school makes every effort to encourage pupils to attend regularly. The link with a school in Gambia enables pupils to explore the differences in childhood in another culture. Behaviour across the school is good. Pupils feel safe and know they can go to an adult with any worries. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy food and physical exercise, and are able to talk intelligently about dangers associated with drugs. They say that their views are valued. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through the class and school councils and readily take on responsibilities, including playground 'buddies' and peer mediators. They are polite and quick to give support to each other in both the classroom and the playground. Pupils develop sound skills that contribute to their economic well-being through activities such as fund raising for a school in the Gambia.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although there is some good teaching and learning, the quality is uneven, meaning that there are variations in how well pupils learn from year to year. Teachers plan well for most groups of pupils but at times, activities are either too easy or too difficult and consequently not all pupils make the progress that they should. Progress is also not as good when teachers spend too long directing pupils, causing a few to struggle with maintaining interest and concentration. In Years 1 and 2, activities do not always stimulate the interest of boys and are not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. In good lessons, teachers use assessment information well to plan work to meet the needs of individual pupils, use drama and group work to good effect, and encourage pupils to assess the progress they have made in the lesson. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to explain new concepts and bring activities alive. Well trained teaching assistants give good support when they are working with groups of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides sound opportunities in literacy, numeracy and ICT for all pupils to make satisfactory progress. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection, with the addition of a computer suite and the use of interactive whiteboards to enhance learning in every classroom. However, these resources are

not always used effectively to motivate pupils and to provide opportunities for them to explore and discover for themselves.

The curriculum has good and commendable features, notably in provision for music. Everyone enjoyed the outstanding performance of the school band during assembly. The quality of pupils' artwork displayed around the school is of a high standard. A wide variety of topic work inspires the pupils, resulting in examples of written work of a good standard. Learning is extended through a range of special events, visits and visitors. These have a positive effect on pupils' interest in school and strengthen links with the local community. The school has good links with the local church, which enhances both the teaching of religious education and assemblies. Pupils enjoy a good range of clubs which effectively support their learning. There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills, which encourages them to work hard in most lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good quality care is evident in the effective routines and practices implemented by staff to ensure pupils' health and safety and well-being. Child protection arrangements are well managed and secure.

Parents are positive about the care shown to their children. This is reflected in comments such as, 'My child has special needs and the school has such a good atmosphere that the children seem to have the skills and values to be friendly to each other and to support my child.' Strong links with outside agencies support all pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families. Strong links are established with the community, evident in a large group of volunteers that effectively support pupils' learning.

Provision for academic support is not as robust as the provision for pastoral care. Senior managers have worked hard to ensure that the tracking of pupils' individual progress is given higher focus by all teachers, but the impact of this is not yet evident. Although there are examples of helpful, evaluative marking, particularly for older pupils, marking is not always clear enough for pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has extended the senior management team to strengthen the drive towards school improvement. Senior managers are supportive of the headteacher, and are ensuring the school gets a firmer grip on improving progress in the classroom. They have begun to reconsider the school's self-evaluation procedures to identify key areas for improvement and have developed good systems for tracking pupils' progress. They have a good grasp of the need to use tracking and assessment data to set targets to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. Although all members of the senior management team are involved in the monitoring of pupils' work and lesson plans, there is limited opportunity for them to conduct classroom observations. As a result, they cannot accurately evaluate the quality of teaching or check on the progress pupils are making in lessons. Senior managers

have a good understanding of the progress of pupils in their own classes, but do not yet have a clear view of pupils' progress across the school. Governors are well led. Many, including newly appointed governors, are attending training sessions. As a result, they are making good progress in their depth of understanding about the ways in which they can they can monitor the school's effectiveness more accurately.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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

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.

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

13 November 2008

Dear Children

Midhurst C of E Primary School, Midhurst, GU299JX

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to your school. We enjoyed talking to you very much. We thought you were very friendly and polite.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education and these are some things we thought were good:

- You enjoy school and behave well.
- You have a good understanding of how important it is to eat healthy food and keep fit by regular exercise.
- You like the clubs that you attend, visits outside school and learning about children in other countries.
- Teachers and adults look after you well.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make your school better.

These are the things we have suggested that the school does now:

- Ensure that lessons in Years 1 and 2 are more interesting, particularly for boys, and expect more from those of you who can manage your work easily.
- Plan your work more carefully so that it is not too hard or too easy to help you learn more quickly.
- Make sure that senior teachers and governors are more involved in checking how well you are doing to help your school get even better.

Best wishes for the future.

Christine Pollitt
Lead Inspector