

Motcombe Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114460
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	395500
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	Hilary Macdonald HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Aggett
Headteacher	Jane Midwinter
Date of previous school inspection	June 2008
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed twenty lessons or parts of lessons taught by thirteen teachers and two teaching assistants. Inspectors talked to pupils about their work, as well as seeking their views of school life and behaviour. Discussions took place with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors observed much of the school's work and looked at documents such as monitoring records, data regarding pupils' progress, and improvement plans and policies, including those relating to safeguarding. The inspectors analysed questionnaires from staff as well as from 104 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Motcombe is much larger than the average-sized infant school. An additional class was added in 2010, so that the current Year 1 cohort is larger than Reception and Year 2. The majority of pupils are White British with a small but increasing proportion from a range of minority ethnic groups. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly lower than average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also lower than that found in most schools.

The school provides a daily breakfast club that is managed by the governing body and the quality of provision was inspected as part of this inspection. The school has gained a number of awards including the International Global Citizenship Award.

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in leadership. A new Chair of the Governing Body, headteacher, deputy headteacher, Early Years Foundation Stage leader and Year 2 leader have all been appointed.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because there is some variation in the quality of teaching and pupils' rates of progress. School leaders are successful and highly ambitious, but leadership is not yet fully distributed through the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strength of the school.
- Pupils achieve well. They make a very positive start to school in Reception and make good gains in their learning. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment is in line with that found nationally which represents good progress overall. A drive to raise standards in reading has been conspicuously successful. Mathematics calculation skills are good but there are not yet enough opportunities to apply these skills more widely.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are skilled at providing stimulating, worthwhile activities that engage pupils well and encourage a love of learning. Opportunities to engage all pupils at the start and end of lessons are sometimes missed. In some lessons tasks are not accurately enough matched to pupils' specific learning needs and, generally, the marking of workbooks does not provide clear enough guidance to pupils on next steps to improve further.
- Behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. Effective systems are in place to manage behaviour and to provide suitable additional support where required. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are kept safe and secure.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is highly focused and is supported well by senior staff. Analysis of the progress of individual pupils, groups and classes results in a highly accurate understanding of the impact of provision on school outcomes. Performance management is rigorous and suitably informs professional development to improve teaching quality. Middle leadership varies in quality. In some cases subject or year group leaders are new to their roles, but in other cases leadership is not fully effective. Some middle leaders could make a better contribution to school improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress further, by providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical calculation skills in a range of practical and investigative situations.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all teaching is good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are actively engaged in activities at the beginning and end of lessons and that opportunities for pupils to discuss their own thinking and learning are maximised
 - ensuring that tasks in all subject areas are accurately matched to pupils' learning needs
 - ensuring that pupils' workbooks are regularly marked and that pupils are given clear guidance on next steps to improve their work further.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - ensuring all staff with leadership roles are provided with the training, guidance and support required to enable them to understand and carry out their roles effectively
 - ensuring all staff with leadership responsibilities are clearly held to account for their role in securing further improvement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who expressed a view said that they consider their children are making good progress at school, including in developing reading, writing and mathematics skills. On entry to the Reception classes, children's skills, knowledge and understanding are typically below those expected for their age. As a result of good care and exciting provision that is carefully built around the children's own interests and specific needs, children settle well and become confident and happy learners. Their very good achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is promoted well by the rich range of stimulating activities such as the Olympics-based themes. Children simulated synchronised swimming, made and tested javelins and took part in a range of creative activities inspired by the Olympic flame. Children enjoyed writing certificates and letters of congratulation to each other for displaying Olympic values. Almost all children in Reception are meeting or exceeding the expected goals for entry to Year 1.

Attainment has varied over time, and is currently broadly average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's data show that there is some variability in progress from class to class and between year groups in Key Stage 1. Inspection evidence confirms that progress is more rapid in Year 2 than in Year 1. However, in a highly effective Year 1 numeracy lesson pupils made rapid progress as

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every single pupil responded with rapt attention to the teacher's time story, identifying the correct time on their own clock face.

Different groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make similar progress. Close attention and support, including individual programmes, are rapidly provided should a pupil be at risk of not making good progress. There is strong and sensitive provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including effective specialised support for pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour.

The focus on literacy, particularly a major review of the teaching of reading, coupled with the schools' determination to strengthen the attainment of more-able pupils has resulted in raised standards in reading and a significant increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels in reading and writing this academic year. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is systematic throughout the school and children in Reception classes demonstrated a confident ability to sound out words, name letters and to apply their phonic knowledge independently when writing. Many pupils are experienced readers and are able to explain why they have chosen a particular book. In mathematics pupils' calculation skills are good. However, the application of these skills in problem-solving activities is less secure.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers who expressed a view said that their children are taught well. Overall teaching is good, with a minority that is outstanding and some that remains satisfactory. Senior staff are aware of the inconsistencies in provision that exist and are rightly focused on removing these to ensure that all teaching is good.

The warm and positive relationships between staff and pupils and the many wonderful displays, such as lighthouse drawings in connection with the topic on Beachy Head and the 'Learning Stars' awards provide a good environment for learning. Lessons are generally well planned and most activities are interesting and fun. As a result, pupils are eager to participate and learn and progress readily. This was demonstrated in a Year 2 English lesson in which pupils worked collaboratively together, using rich vocabulary to create glossaries for non-fiction texts. However, on some occasions activities are not closely enough matched to pupils' stages of learning and some pupils find work either very easy or too hard. Teachers use appropriate questioning to check pupils' understanding and to address any misconceptions. Whilst this is good, opportunities to engage all pupils, including in answering questions, or in talking about their learning at the start or end of lessons, are not fully utilised. Although pupils understand the need to work hard or to try and do better, the marking of pupils' workbooks does not currently provide clear enough guidance to pupils on the next steps to take to improve their work further.

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Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive effective individual or small group support in the classroom in addition to specialised intervention programmes. These pupils progress well alongside their peers.

A range of exciting topics, including 'Wild Animals' ensure that pupils make generally good gains in learning in most subjects. A good feature is linking subjects together to make learning more meaningful and coherent. For example, in Year 2 topic investigation activities pupils successfully developed their scientific enquiry skills at the same time as reinforcing measuring skills in mathematics and promoting collaborative learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully both through the nurturing approach of the school, spiritual assemblies, links with schools in this country and abroad and through experiencing the arts in many forms including the Motcombe Gardens project.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils are friendly, welcoming and polite. Pupils were observed treating each other with kindness and respect and they were all aware of the behaviour focus for the week, 'Be gentle'. Behaviour in assembly was excellent. Pupils listened with sustained attention and participated appropriately. They were eager to see who would be awarded a 'dove certificate', earning points towards a whole class reward, and correctly identified that the pupil had demonstrated 'peace' during the assembly. Systems and practices for promoting good behaviour are embedded systematically throughout the school.

Pupils are clearly happy in school and at breakfast club. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and secure and that there are always grown-ups available to help them. Parents and carers are also confident that their children are well looked after and that behaviour is good. However, a very small minority of parents and carers felt that incidents of bullying were not effectively handled. Inspectors looked closely at this. Pupils know about different forms that bullying can take and say that it is rare and when it does happen it is dealt with quickly so that it stops. There are few significant incidents of bullying or racism recorded over time. However, at play times and lunchtimes there is some boisterous playing, particularly from boys currently in Year 1. Systems for ensuring that pupils are kept safe when on the school site have been enhanced with staff supervising the entrances to school during morning arrival time.

A drive to boost attendance has been successful and attendance has increased overall. It is currently in line with the national average. Despite this, a very small minority of pupils are regularly late to school or are absent too often and, as a result, they make slower progress than others in their class. The school works suitably with families and relevant agencies to improve attendance with some success.

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Leadership and management

The success of the school is underpinned by the headteacher's dynamic and determined leadership. She provides very clear direction for the school's work, securing improvements in provision and pupil's achievements. The governing body is equally effective ensuring safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. It provides an appropriate balance of challenge and support. In particular, the Chair of the Governing Body possesses highly relevant knowledge and skills and works in close partnership with the headteacher and her deputy. The governing body ensures that breakfast club arrangements keep pupils safe and contribute well to their learning and development.

Distribution of leadership is expanding, but remains a priority for development. A number of members of the leadership team are relatively new to their posts of responsibility. Strategies such as coaching and mentoring, participation in local and national training courses and working in partnership with more experienced staff ensure that staff are extending their understanding of roles and accountabilities and are increasing their leadership skills. Some middle leadership is less effective and their contribution to school improvement could be better.

Key senior leaders hold an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including with regard to teaching. Performance management is directly linked to school improvement and pupil progress and the headteacher sets high and appropriate expectations for all of the staff. Improvements brought about by current leaders have been sharply focused on the most important areas for improvement and plans clearly detail next steps. The impact of training and actions taken so far can be seen in significantly improved end of Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes as well as in improved end of Key Stage 1 results.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well as demonstrated by the good and carefully monitored progress of all groups of pupils. There is a narrowing of the gap in pupils' performance compared to national averages. All groups of pupils are afforded positions of responsibility and no discrimination of any kind is tolerated. This school has a happy and inclusive ethos.

The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences which help to raise children's aspirations and develop their understanding of the society in which they live. The school environment, including resident chickens, and the local area are used to provide enriching and 'real-life' activities to promote learning. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. There are close and extended links with worldwide communities in addition to assemblies and teachers' daily promotion of positive personal qualities. High expectations and the regular opportunities provided for pupils to experience excitement, happiness and wonder in their education promotes pupils' personal and emotional development well.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Motcombe Infants' School, Eastbourne, BN21 1SN

Thank you for making inspectors welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you about your learning. We came to your assembly and thought your singing was beautiful. Your work displayed in all of the corridors around school was of a very high standard and we agreed that you should be very proud of it!

You go to a good school where you make good progress in your learning because teaching is good. Mostly, you find lessons enjoyable because teachers make activities interesting. Your behaviour is good and you work and play together well. The grown-ups take good care of you and we saw that you feel safe and happy.

Your headteacher leads your school very well. She is supported well by your deputy headteacher, the governors and other staff. Your headteacher wants your school to be even better. We have asked her and the staff to do this by helping you make even better progress including in mathematics, particularly by doing more problem-solving tasks. We have asked that teachers make sure you are as active as possible at the start and end of lessons and that your work is not too easy or too hard. We have asked that teachers mark your work regularly and make comments that tell you how you can do better next time. We also want some leaders to be trained, guided and supported to bring about further school improvement.

I know that you all care a lot about your school. You can help to improve your school too, by continuing to work hard, behave well and making sure that you attend school every day and on time unless you are unwell.

Thank you once again for welcoming us to your school.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

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