

Rye Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135299
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	333751
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	240
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nikki Stuart
Headteacher	Paul Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Grove Rye TN31 7ND
Telephone number	01797 222825
Fax number	01797 222825

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school. It opened in September 2008, when most pupils and some staff transferred from two previous schools that closed. The great majority of pupils are White British. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. These largely involve emotional and behavioural difficulties, and there are several pupils with dyslexia. A separately managed children's centre shares the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rye Community Primary School provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils.

'There is obviously a lot more work to be done as it is still early days, but I think that the children have all settled in very well at the new school. Their behaviour and keen attitude to working has improved tremendously and is lovely to see.' This comment from a parent aptly sums up the picture at Rye. The school has had notable success in building pupils' confidence and self-esteem – not least, through the magnificent new buildings and site that really show the pupils how much they are valued. They respond in kind. They are proud of their school and they behave well and show positive attitudes to learning that are contributing to the progress that they are now making in lessons. Again, parents readily remark on this: 'I have noticed a much more eager attitude towards learning from both my children since starting here. The curriculum has so many interesting topics and my children have enjoyed working at home on class projects.' Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn through linking subjects together. For example, Year 6 pupils drew on their skills and knowledge of literacy, geography and information and communication technology when researching differences in lifestyle between people in India and the United Kingdom.

When pupils transferred to the school in September, they joined with low standards and many brought with them a legacy of past underachievement. At the end of this first year, standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 are still below average, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. After a shaky start in some classes, teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving so that pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. Teachers mostly manage their classes well and succeed in engaging pupils' interest so that pupils listen, learn and increasingly join in. However, teachers do not always match work closely enough to pupils' different abilities. Too often, pupils of quite widely different capabilities are given similar work to do. Pupils with learning difficulties keep up because they benefit from good support from the many teaching assistants who help in class, but more able pupils do not do as well as they should because they are not always challenged enough. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress and are on track to attain above average standards, but much of what they do is directed by adults and they have too few opportunities to make choices for themselves and to develop as independent learners.

A number of parents are unhappy about the many changes of teacher that there have been in some classes and the shared responsibility for teaching classes which means that in some classes pupils have three different teachers over the course of the week. Even those who voice concerns recognise that school leaders have done much to mitigate any negative impact that this might have. As one commented, 'It is a shame that the class has had so many different teachers, but my daughter is getting on really well and doesn't seem to mind.' Parents and pupils alike give credit to the headteacher and senior leaders for the growing success of Rye Community Primary School. In a typical comment, one parent told inspectors, 'I am so impressed with the headteacher and his commitment to the school. His enthusiasm is so apparent. I have no doubt he has the children's best interests at heart.' This was echoed by a pupil who described the headteacher as 'very strong but also kind and interested in the welfare of pupils' and said, 'He takes an interest in everyone.' The headteacher and senior leaders know the school well and their monitoring systems have already secured measurable improvements. For example, earlier this year a thorough analysis of marking throughout the school resulted in the identification of some clear inconsistencies, and this in turn led to a huge improvement in the quality and

effectiveness of teachers' marking. As a result, the academic guidance for pupils is now as good as the pastoral care they receive. That such changes for the better could be made in such a short time shows the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children started the year with skills that were broadly in line with those expected for their ages. The good progress they have made means that they are on track to reach above average standards by the end of the Reception Year. This is due to good teaching, particularly of their basic language and mathematical skills, although there is a preponderance of adult-led activities. There are relatively few opportunities for children to make choices for themselves and this limits the development of their independent learning skills. Nevertheless, children enjoy school and this is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes. Although the outdoor area provides a range of activities matched to the six areas of learning, adults do not always use questioning to ensure that children are consistently challenged to make the best progress possible when they are playing and learning outside.

Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. Adults are careful to ensure that children are looked after well and they keep records that track each child's progress, although these tend to be made at the end of each day rather than on short notes during the course of activities. This is not making the best use of staff time and risks missing out on helpful detail on children's individual progress and learning needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match work in lessons to pupils' different capabilities, particularly to ensure that more able pupils are challenged and extended.
- Help children in the Reception Year to develop as independent learners by giving them more opportunities to make choices for themselves.

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

Standards are below average but this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to the pupils' assessed attainment at the start of the year and in their previous schools. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to the other pupils in their classes because they benefit from well-targeted support. More able pupils do not all do as well as they should because they are not always set work that extends and challenges them. The progress that pupils make in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares them adequately for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour is good. Pupils appreciate the calm, positive approach to managing behaviour that is now consistently used by all teaching and support staff. This is helping even those pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour to settle and to learn. However, some of the

pupils who have had a succession of different teachers are slower to settle and do not listen as well as the pupils in other classes. Pupils are confident that adults will always listen to what they have to say and are clear about what they should do if they have any problems. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils get on well with each other and they know that 'unkind things are bang out of order'. Pupils are proud of their new school and they enjoy the increasing range of stimulating activities both in lessons and during playtime. The playtime snack bar is very popular. It is an example of how the pupils have responded well to the school's encouragement of healthy lifestyles. The positive contribution to the community made by the pupils is reflected in the sensitive and mature way they carry out their responsibilities. For example, the older pupils enjoy helping the younger ones by organising playground games. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

With staff in some classes away on long-term sick leave, and a succession of temporary teachers, there has been a disruption to pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 1. School leaders have helped to reduce the adverse impact of this, and their monitoring of lessons and teachers' planning has helped staff to improve their effectiveness so that there are now many classes where the teaching is good and where pupils are now making better progress in lessons than was the case at the start of the year. Teachers generally manage their classes well and motivate the pupils so that they want to learn. Learning intentions are set out so that pupils know the purpose of each lesson, but these are not always sharp enough. Sometimes they indicate what the pupils are going to do rather than what they are expected to learn. Not enough is expected of the more able pupils. This is particularly the case when the whole class is given the same work to do or where there is too much reliance on unchallenging worksheets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

That pupils are increasingly eager to learn, as commented upon by many parents, is due in large part to the introduction of a creative, skills-based curriculum that has made learning purposeful and exciting. Many of the topics that classes have studied have greatly engaged their interest. For example, the 'learning logs' of the pupils in Year 3 show how their research into where food comes from has taken them out to farms and markets. Pupils were also helped to develop their enterprise skills by growing their own vegetables on the school allotment and selling them at the local farmers' market. Year 4 pupils studying Japan have not had the chance of a field trip, but they are no less enthralled by a topic that has linked work across a wide range of different subjects. Older pupils produced some high quality work as part of their study of the Marsh Link railway line. The introduction of Spanish in each class has drawn on links with the neighbouring secondary school and has certainly fired the pupils' enthusiasm. There are relatively few after-school clubs on offer to the pupils, and this has been raised by a number of parents as a point for improvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Safeguarding arrangements meet the requirements of the latest government guidelines and pupils are confident that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns. The school's recent focus on increasing the effectiveness of marking has been successful and has begun to impact on the quality of pupils' work, especially in Years 5 and 6. It means that pupils generally know what they need to do to improve. In some classes, teachers use their marking to pose questions to pupils that engage them in a dialogue that helps them think more about their learning. This is not the case in every class. Sometimes, teachers' marking poses questions that remain unanswered. The school works in close and effective partnership with outside agencies, particularly to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties through support from specialised therapists where appropriate. Much effort has gone in to the school's pending bid for dyslexia friendly status in order to maximise the help provided for this group of pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents, pupils, staff and governors all recognise the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. He has built an effective senior leadership team that has enabled this new school to get off to a successful start. Together, school leaders and governors have created a climate for learning where pupils are settled and increasingly eager to learn. Parents have noticed the improvement in their own and other children's behaviour and attitudes over the past year. There have been improvements too in the effectiveness of teaching and learning and an acceleration in pupils' rates of progress. Improvements have been driven by careful monitoring and evaluation of provision. The feedback given to teachers on their marking has helped to ensure a much more consistent approach to academic guidance this term. Leaders appreciate, however, that they have further to go. Other than members of the senior leadership team, staff with responsibilities for managing subjects are only just beginning to take on and develop their roles.

The school has taken very seriously its responsibility for promoting community cohesion. It works in increasingly close partnership with parents, neighbouring schools and the local community, including through its links with the separately managed children's centre which shares its site. Throughout the school, topics have been chosen that have helped to introduce pupils to and extend their interest in lives, cultures and beliefs from around the globe. Even the youngest children enjoy reading stories from Russia, and the 'stories from around the world' initiative has introduced pupils to tales and an interest in the ways of life of folk from across Africa, India, Japan, Aboriginal Australia and Native America.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
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?	3

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

¹Grade 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.

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
The extent to which 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 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

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rye Community Primary School, Rye TN31 7ND

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your new school. You are really proud of the super buildings and site, and it is good to see that that is also rubbing off in the growing pride you have in your learning. Rye is giving you a satisfactory education. After a mixed start in some classes, with some of you having several changes of teacher, we could see that things are improving because the school is so well run. You are making reasonable progress, but we know that your headteacher and other staff are keen for you to do even better. They have made changes to make sure that you all now get clear guidance through marking that helps you to improve your work. These are already making a difference. We have asked teachers to be sure to match work to each of your different abilities. When you are all expected to learn the same thing in lessons, the work is too easy for some of you. You can help too by telling your teachers when you are finding the work too easy.

The school takes good care of you and the 'learning logs' are making your learning interesting and fun. The 'stories from around the world' are helping you to learn about life in other countries and about people from different backgrounds, and they are also helping you to develop your literacy skills at the same time. We were delighted to see how well behaved you are and how well you get on with each other. Some of your parents told us how the move to the new school has made you really eager to learn. We could see that too in the way you listen to your teachers and join in during lessons. The children in Minnows are doing really well in their basic skills but we have asked staff to give them more opportunities to choose activities for themselves so that they develop their independent learning skills.

Thank you again for being so helpful to us on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector