

Polegate Primary School

Oakleaf Drive, Polegate, BN26 6PT

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and they make good progress. Their progress in reading is outstanding. The proportion of pupils who exceed the expected progress in writing and mathematics is rising.
- Teaching is consistently good and improving further. Senior leaders hold high expectations of all staff, and provide a strong, clear vision of what should happen in each lesson.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, and for some, their progress is outstanding. They are supported exceptionally well in improving their reading.
- Those struggling with writing or mathematics are also well supported. The school ensures this extra support does not interfere with these pupils' other learning.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is outstanding because they have tackled the substantial issues that faced the school and rapidly brought about impressive improvements.
- Pupils are determined to do their very best work. Handwriting is highly impressive and pupils keep their books very neat because they are proud of their work. They use their time well and frequently respond to the comments made by teachers in their books.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Around the school, pupils are polite and kind to one another, reflecting the respect adults show them.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Attendance has improved rapidly and is high because pupils like being at school.
- Teachers have worked as a team to develop exciting topics for pupils to study. This includes helpful work for pupils to do at home.
- Senior leaders and governors make sure that all the procedures and requirements to keep pupils safe are given a high priority.
- The school's communication with parents and carers is excellent. Consequently, they have great confidence in the school, and feel that their children are well cared for and successful.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently outstanding across year groups. Occasionally, the tasks given to some pupils are too easy.
- Progress in writing and mathematics is not always as rapid as it is in reading.

Information about this inspection

- The three inspectors observed learning in 25 lessons, taught by 19 teachers, including sessions taken by teaching assistants. They looked at the work pupils were doing, and at the sessions to support pupils who need extra help and to challenge the most-able pupils. Approximately a third of these observations were undertaken together with senior leaders.
- Inspectors had discussions with senior leaders, teachers who lead aspects of the curriculum, pupils and members of the governing body. They looked at documents provided by the school, including those tracking the progress pupils are making, those setting out the school's approach to teaching, and documents and procedures about keeping pupils safe. They reviewed the school's plans for further improvements, and looked at how governors ensure that finances intended for specific purposes make a difference where it is needed most.
- The inspection team met with pupils, and spoke to them about the work they were doing during lessons. They also spoke to pupils informally during break times.
- Inspectors considered the 84 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents and carers informally before and after school. The responses to 19 questionnaires completed by staff working at the school were reviewed. Correspondence forwarded to the inspection team was also taken into account.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Janet Simms | Additional Inspector |
| Andrew Lyons | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is of above average size with two classes in each year group.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. Other pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported within school is above average. The proportion needing external support or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional government support to promote the achievement of pupils who are known to have been eligible for free school meals, and children looked after by the local authority, is average.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- There is a children's centre adjacent to the school, where pupils can attend a before- and after-school club. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching outstanding so that progress in writing and mathematics is consistently as rapid as it is in reading, by:
 - challenging all pupils to the full extent of their capability throughout each lesson
 - making sure that the best practices already in the school are implemented more frequently by all teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- After a dip in the standards reached by pupils at the end of the 2010 academic year, standards have been rising steadily. Pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics, and outstanding progress in reading. They develop a great passion for learning. A pupil said that reading is now her 'favourite thing', having previously struggled with it.
- Children join the school in Reception with skills and knowledge which are often well below those that are typical for their age, particularly in their communication, language and skills with numbers, as well as their physical development. The exceptional resources, outstanding teaching and well-established routines in the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that children quickly develop a thirst for learning. They make rapid progress and, by the time they move into Year 1, they have made up ground.
- As pupils continue through the school, their progress is never less than good, and is rapid at times. There was previously some underachievement, particularly in writing and mathematics, due to weak teaching, but the improvements mean that pupils have caught up again and are forging ahead. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen and are close to the average.
- Boys and girls, as well as pupils from other groups, all make similar progress because of the equally high expectations for all pupils. Observations and the work in pupils' books show that this good progress is typical; it is not always rapid because the level of challenge for pupils in some classes could occasionally be even higher.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because they are well supported, both during lessons and through extra help they get, particularly in the 'early learning' part of the day.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 have made the most of the good habits of learning they have established and are well placed to reach standards which continue the trend of improvement. A higher proportion than usual are now working at the highest levels because they get good opportunities to develop these advanced skills and knowledge. The most-able pupils in this year group are given extra challenge and support when they need it.
- Pupils who are known to have been eligible for additional support make good progress. Initially, the standards they are typically working at are below those of other pupils in their class. However, the gap in their attainment narrows as they go through the school; by the end of Year 6, the gap is minimal, and there is no gap at all in their reading ability.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning because teachers make sure that the topics around which they base pupils' work are exciting and include stimulating experiences. Pupils look forward to finding out what their new topic will be, and then participate wholeheartedly in exploring lots of different ideas and developing their skills. This is because teaching is consistently good, and increasingly, frequently outstanding.
- Pupils' skills in reading are particularly impressive because there is a strong emphasis on enjoying reading, and doing so for a purpose. Adults demonstrate this extremely well and training has ensured that they use a consistent approach to teaching phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) across the school.
- Writing has been a focus for development in the school. The experiences pupils are provided with, the emphasis on developing handwriting and the excellent feedback through marking, mean that the quality of writing has risen quickly. For example, pupils are given a high-quality writing journal for their own writing, in which they take great pride. Their work is also shared with a wide range of people, from younger or older pupils, to parents and carers, to Members of Parliament, so that writing has a clear purpose.
- The teaching of mathematics has also been an area the school has developed. Pupils improve

their speed and confidence in mental arithmetic because teachers go over this with them daily. Training has meant that teachers are now very confident in making mathematics learning effective.

- Pupils like the fact that there are usually three levels of work for them, from 'mild' to 'hot' and on to 'spicy'. Despite this, there are occasions when all the pupils in some classes are expected to do the same task, and this is too easy for some of them. Their excellent attitudes towards their learning mean they willingly remain well focused, but they do not make as rapid progress as they could on these occasions. Not all teachers notice this quickly enough.
- Teachers make sure that other adults helping in class, or through extra support, are well informed about what pupils need to do. All the adults work very effectively together. Teachers willingly share ideas about how to improve, although not all teachers implement the very best practices they have had the opportunity to see.
- Pupils improve their work well because teachers make very helpful comments when they mark their books. Pupils are also encouraged to think about the targets they need to be working towards, and to help decide how well they have achieved what they should. The systems to make sure these are always available mean that the quality of writing and mathematics is consistent whatever subject pupils are working in.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and the rise in achievement is an indication of their determination to do well. They appreciate the efforts of the teachers to make learning interesting, and feel they are given lots of tips about how to improve their work.
- Pupils get lots of opportunities to have an input about what they learn, and they say that adults respect their views. They also respect each other's views and make sensible, helpful comments when they look at other pupils' work. They reflect carefully about what they themselves can do to improve.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children develop great curiosity because of the way these classes are organised and run. They become confident learners, playing and learning happily together, and negotiating when they have differences of opinion. Their social skills develop just as quickly as their other learning.
- Older pupils also have plenty of opportunities to take on responsibilities, which they relish. This includes planning, preparing and running the school radio broadcasts, as well as being on the school council, a prefect, playground 'buddies', and many other ways they help around the school. They enthusiastically help to keep the school tidy and pleasant to be in.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved a lot, and that it is managed the same way by all adults, so it is very fair. Any pupils who might need reminders about the school's expectations, or who may get overexcited, respond very quickly so that learning is very seldom disrupted.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. In the pupils' views, bullying is extremely rare, and if it ever happened, it would be dealt with quickly because no one at the school will tolerate it. They feel confident the school keeps them safe, and they have an excellent understanding of how they can help to keep themselves safe, including when they use the internet or in the community.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational. She has developed a strong team, and together they have established a compelling vision for the school, to continue raising achievement.
- Senior leaders hold high expectations of all adults in the school, and they lead by example, by

ensuring that their own work is of a high standard. They use their accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching to set clear goals, and encourage and support teachers to reflect on how to improve. Consequently, no weak teaching remains, and the proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing.

- Teachers who lead different aspects of the school seek out the very best practice elsewhere, and look for ways this can be used in their school.
- The subjects and topics pupils study are carefully planned to develop the skills they need to be successful in their learning. Leaders make sure that they are exciting, that each topic starts with a flourish that draws pupils in, and that it ends with a celebration of all they have learnt. For example, pupils were highly motivated by the activities which focused on their topic of 'Space'. The 'space-walk' display down a corridor shows the high quality of pupils' work.
- The quality of communication with parents and carers is exceptional because leaders provide frequent and plentiful information in a range of ways. The school newsletters and website give an extensive insight into the learning pupils are doing and the many things happening in school. Parents and carers feel very well informed, and say that their children are enjoying their learning and like coming to school.
- Parents and carers have a very high regard for the school, and particularly appreciate the additional experiences from which their children benefit. Some of the highlights are the residential trips, including one to France for Year 6. Another is the evening of celebration of talent, the 'Congress' evening, held at a local theatre every two years. Many members of the school community praised this. The school makes sure that every child is involved, demonstrating their very strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The school's swimming pool and the expertise of teachers in using this for physical education, not just swimming lessons, means pupils develop great confidence in the water. Other sports are also developed to a high standard and the school is successful in local competitions. Teachers have excellent confidence in teaching physical education because the additional funding to promote this has been used effectively.
- The local authority provides the school with a light-touch of support. They check that the school is tackling the most important issues, and that senior leaders are accurate in their views about the quality of teaching and how well pupils are doing. The school is viewed as particularly good at supporting teachers new to the profession, and in the way the Early Years Foundation Stage is run.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have accurate views about the performance of the school, the quality of teaching and the issues that need to be tackled. They are given plenty of information by the headteacher and they verify this through their own activities, observing learning and talking to pupils, and parents and carers. They have undertaken training to make sure they understand how the school's data compare with other schools nationally. The procedures and policies to make sure pupils are kept safe are exemplary, and governors frequently review these and look elsewhere for the best practice. Together with the senior leaders, they make sure that the quality of teaching is taken into account when deciding about levels of teachers' pay, so that best practice is encouraged. They have ensured there are excellent systems in place to check that the finances of the school are used wisely, and that funding intended for specific purposes has the necessary impact. They provide excellent levels of challenge alongside their strong support for the school, and share the clear vision for continuing the improvements to make the school even better. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114435 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 444259 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 429 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Tim Fellows |
| Headteacher | Claire Martin-O'Donoghue |
| Date of previous school inspection | 30 November – 1 December 2014 |
| Telephone number | 01323 482404 |
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