

The Brook School

Salterns Road, Maidenbower, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 7JE

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders are ambitious and have high expectations for staff and pupils. They have created a bright and attractive learning environment in which pupils thrive and flourish.
- School leaders acted quickly to reverse the dip in standards in 2016. As a result of actions taken, pupils' standards improved in 2017.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan a variety of tasks that engage pupils and encourage them to do well.
- Staff provide a high level of care for pupils and so they feel safe and secure. Pupils' behaviour is good in classrooms and when they move around the school. They are helpful, friendly and kind to each other.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and governors keep thoroughly up to date with all training. This ensures that arrangements to keep pupils safe are as good as they can be.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. All of the parents who responded to the online survey or who spoke to inspectors would recommend the school to other parents.
- The curriculum is enriched with plenty of additional activities that add to pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Pupils currently in the school make good progress in reading and mathematics. Their communication skills are good.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the expected standard in phonics has increased year on year and is now above the national average.
- The very few pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because they receive the right help and support at an early stage.
- The most able pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Too few pupils reach greater depth in writing and mathematics compared with all pupils nationally.
- Pupils in Year 1 are building on the writing skills they learned in early years. However, overall, pupils make less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. They do not apply their spelling, punctuation or grammar skills to write clearly and fluently.
- Children get off to a good start in early years. They are taught well both in the Nursery and Reception classes and so make good progress in all aspects of their development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' standards in writing by ensuring that:
 - pupils consistently apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills when writing
 - teachers provide specific feedback to pupils about how they should improve the quality of their writing
 - pupils develop a rich vocabulary to express their thoughts and ideas
 - pupils present their work neatly and to a high standard.
- Provide a high level of challenge for the most able pupils by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations of what pupils can do
 - planning work and tasks that meet the needs of higher attaining pupils
 - making the most of learning opportunities that arise during teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders have maintained a good quality of education since the previous inspection. They worked hard to reverse a dip in standards in 2016. As a result, the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils are good. Within this small school, there is a common sense of purpose, with all staff working strongly together as a team.
- School leaders are ambitious and they have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have a broadly accurate view of the strengths of the school and where further improvements can be made. Leaders use a variety of information to help them to plan appropriate actions that will improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders use tracking systems to check on the progress made by different groups of pupils. This has enabled them to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils, make good progress. They are aware that the most able pupils do not reach the standards that they should and are taking steps to address this. However, it is still too early to see the impact of the actions taken.
- Leaders' work is focused on improving the quality of teaching. They visit classrooms formally as well as informally. The headteacher has a teaching commitment, so she is able to gauge accurately the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Staff value the training and support provided that help them to become better teachers. School leaders act quickly to address any weaker teaching.
- The leadership teams have been restructured and so some subject leaders are new to their roles. They have been well trained and so have quickly gained an overview of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. For example, the mathematics leader has introduced a new programme to support the teaching of mathematics and this is already bringing about improvements.
- Leaders provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. Subjects are taught under an overall theme and this helps pupils to make links with new learning. Pupils' enjoyment of school is enhanced by attending lunchtime and after-school activities, including yoga, football and Spanish. Although the curriculum provides pupils with enriching experiences, the time spent on some aspects of literacy means that other subjects are sometimes squeezed out.
- Parents, pupils and staff are proud that the school has Unicef Rights Respecting status. This helps pupils to understand that they and others have rights and also the responsibility to make the right choices. This effectively promotes their understanding of British values. Pupils learn that other people may have different feelings and beliefs and they respect their right to do so.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through the curriculum, assemblies and the school's values. For example, visits to places of interest and stimulating displays of pupils' work provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the wider world and their place within it.
- The school makes effective use of the additional funding available to support the very small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. Much of the funding is used to

provide additional help in classrooms. This helps to build their confidence so that they achieve as well as other pupils.

- The inclusion leader ensures that funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is spent wisely. She is skilled at identifying the precise needs of these pupils and ensures that they are well supported in class. The inclusion leader has established good working relationships with external agencies so she can call on specialist support when it is needed.
- Leaders use the physical education and sport funding effectively to provide pupils with sporting activities they might not otherwise encounter. These include dance, tennis and golf. Coaches have worked with staff to help them to improve their skills. Part of the funding was used to support Year 2 pupils to learn to swim. The impact of this funding is seen in pupils' increased confidence and skills and their enjoyment of taking physical exercise.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents agreed or strongly agreed that their children are happy and safe and enjoy school. One parent reflected the views of many with her comment, 'The Brook School has gone above and beyond to make sure that my child is happy and safe. I know he will be well cared for when he is there.'

Governance of the school

- There have been recent changes to the governing body, with a new chair, two new vice-chairs and some new members. They are working hard to get to grips with their responsibilities and have undertaken various training and development activities. They have reassigned their roles to link with subject leaders and have visited to see for themselves how the school runs on a day-to-day basis.
- Governors have carried out an audit of their skills and this has helped them to recruit new governors with the skills they require.
- Governors have ensured that arrangements for managing the performance of staff, including the headteacher, are in place. Governors provide a good level of support to school leaders, while offering the professional challenge that holds leaders to account. One of the strengths of governance is the way in which governors ensure safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and governors give very high priority to making sure that pupils are safe. Staff are very well trained and have a secure understanding of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. They are very clear about what to do should they be concerned that a child may be at risk from harm. The designated safeguarding lead has been appropriately trained and provides regular updates to all staff. These include the need to be vigilant where a child's safety is of concern. Staff know pupils and their families very well and they seek help and support from external agencies as soon as a concern is raised.
- Leaders maintain good-quality records and diligently follow up concerns. They regularly review their policies and practice to make sure that they are fit for purpose. Minutes of

governors' meetings have safeguarding as a standard item and all incidents relating to safeguarding are duly recorded. Governors ensure that all staff, volunteers and visitors receive the appropriate checks before they are allowed into school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers have good working relationships with pupils and so pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. One of the strengths of teaching is the way that teachers stimulate pupils' interests so that they are excited to learn.
- Teachers plan tasks that are matched well to most pupils' learning needs. At times, teachers miss opportunities to extend pupils' learning by picking up on their comments and responses and this slows progress for some pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to be independent by providing them with suggestions of what they might do if they get stuck with their work. This means that in most classes, little learning time is lost.
- The teaching of phonics has improved and this is reflected in the better outcomes seen in the 2017 Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils are grouped by ability and so staff can tailor the teaching to meet pupils' stages of development. Training has been provided for teaching assistants so they lead some small-group sessions, enabling pupils to progress well.
- Good teaching of mathematics includes the use of a wide range of practical equipment to support pupils' learning. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 used a variety of shapes to discover the number of sides and angles in shapes including octagons and hexagons.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities benefit from additional help provided by teaching assistants. At best, teaching assistants work closely alongside the teacher and so understand what these pupils are to learn. Teaching assistants break the learning tasks into manageable steps and so pupils understand what it is they are to do.
- Pupils are given feedback to help them to improve their work. Sometimes this is verbal and sometimes teachers write comments indicating what pupils need to learn next. While this is effective in mathematics, feedback on pupils' writing is less consistent in identifying weaknesses. Consequently, pupils repeat writing errors and do not reach the standards of which they are capable. Often the feedback provided is over generous and does not help pupils to extend their ideas or to improve their work.
- In some classes, teachers provide a higher level of challenge to extend the most able pupils and this supports their good progress. However, this is not consistent across the school. Some teachers have do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and activities provide insufficient challenge for them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. All parents who responded to the online survey or who wrote comments were highly

delighted with the way in which the school keeps their children safe and secure. Staff know pupils and their families very well and they are quick to act should they have a concern that a pupil is struggling with some aspect of school life.

- Pupils love school and they say that there is little they would want to change. They say that adults care for them and that there is always someone they can talk to should they have a concern. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and this is reflected in their attendance, which is above average.
- Through the Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award, pupils understand that they have certain rights but that it is important to respect the rights of others. They get on very well together and treat each other with care and respect.
- Staff ensure that pupils are taught how to stay safe. For example, pupils know they should never give out personal information when using computers. They know about road safety and that they should not approach strangers. Swimming lessons for pupils in Year 2 help to keep pupils safe from dangers associated with water.
- The school has very few pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. Staff are very well aware of the social and emotional needs of these children and they go out of their way to support them and their families.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide pupils with a happy and nutritious start and end to the school day. Staff are friendly and approachable and they make sure that pupils are well cared for.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in classrooms and when they move around the school. Playtimes are happy times because there is a wealth of activities available for pupils. There is an extensive trim trail that pupils use to climb, stretch and jump and this helps them to keep physically active.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and so treat each other and adults with respect. They are polite, helpful and kind to each other. They respond quickly to teachers' instructions by tidying up equipment after lunchtime and lining up for the afternoon activities.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying but say that such incidents are rare. On the odd occasion that pupils fall out, there are adults on hand to sort out any problems. School records show few reported incidents relating to poor behaviour. At times, when the learning tasks are too easy, some pupils become bored and fidgety and begin to chat among themselves.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School leaders acted quickly to address the dip in standards in 2016. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 was close to the national average. Pupils' outcomes are now good, but attainment in reading and mathematics is better than in writing.

- The very few disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities also make good progress.
- Published performance information suggests that boys have not achieved as well as girls over time, particularly in reading and writing. As a result, the school reviewed the curriculum and now provides more topics and themes that engage the interest of boys. Currently, boys are achieving similar standards to those of girls.
- By Year 2, pupils read fluently and confidently and are on track to reach the expected standard in 2018. They have a secure grasp of phonics that helps them to tackle unfamiliar words. They say that they like books and read often both at home and at school.
- Pupils have well-developed communication skills. They speak clearly and have a wide vocabulary to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for them to speak in class. This helps pupils gain the confidence to respond to teachers' questions, as well as raising questions of their own. Pupils show respect towards others by listening carefully to what they have to say.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics lessons. Effective questioning helps them to make good progress. Pupils in Year 1 quickly identified more complicated shapes, including pentagons, hexagons and octagons. They enjoyed the challenge of using elastic bands to create copies of these shapes onto a geoboard.
- Current pupils make slower progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. This is because they do not consistently apply the basic spelling rules that they have learned, their handwriting is not correctly formed and they do not use punctuation accurately. In some cases, their writing does not make sense and vocabulary is simple and often repetitive. In some classes, the presentation of their work is not as good as it should be. However, pupils in Year 1 are now making stronger progress because they are building on the skills they developed in the Reception class.
- Too few pupils are working at greater depth, which means that the most able pupils are underachieving. This is because teachers do not all plan to meet the needs of their higher attaining pupils. They do not all deepen pupils' thinking by probing their thinking, or capitalise on opportunities to extend their understanding.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are very well prepared for Year 1. They are warmly welcomed into a stimulating environment that allows them to develop their skills across all areas of learning. They settle quickly into the routines of the Nursery and Reception classes because staff have created a safe and secure place for them to learn.
- Children speak confidently to visitors and take great delight in sharing what they are doing. One child sensibly told visitors that they are not allowed to go outside without a coat, as it was too cold outside.
- Staff use assessment information to plan activities that support children's good progress. Staff make effective use of a published assessment programme that allows parents to share the children's learning. This has improved communication with parents and enabled them to see for themselves how well their children are learning.

They particularly value the insights the programme brings and they feel that they are true partners in their children's education.

- Parents commented on the good transition arrangements that prepare their child both for starting school and for moving to Year 1. They felt that staff visits to pre-schools and discussions with staff were particularly helpful.
- The most able children make good progress. For example, children write at length, showing neat handwriting, and take pride in their work. They can count to 20 and beyond and enjoy talking about their work.
- There is a good balance between activities that children choose for themselves and those that are led by adults. Planned tasks cover all areas of learning and there is an appropriate balance of activities that take place in the classroom and outside.
- Adults are skilled at observing children and listening to what they have to say. They extend children's learning by asking questions that develop their thinking. There has been a recent focus on developing children's communication skills and this has led to improvements in children's speech and language development.
- Children's personal development is good. They share and take turns and they listen carefully to what each other has to say. They are curious about the world around them and show concentration and perseverance when completing tasks. They behave very well in the classrooms and when they move around the school.
- The early years leaders have a good overview of provision and outcomes in the setting. They work closely with their team to ensure that tasks and activities planned for children extend their learning and personal development. However, the leaders have not yet established a clear view of children's potential to achieve above and beyond the national expectations, which are their current targets.

School details

Unique reference number	131602
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10039655

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	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Flowers
Headteacher	Fiona Dowley
Telephone number	01293 886521
Website	www.brook.w-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	office@brook.w-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most infant schools. Pupils are taught in single-age classes. There is provision for children in early years in the Nursery and two Reception classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage, with few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes to the governing body. Two new governors have recently joined the governing body and the chair and vice-chairs are new to their roles.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons, most of them jointly with school leaders. They observed pupils' behaviour in class and as they moved around the school. They looked at work in pupils' books and they listened to pupils read in Year 2.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders. Inspectors also met with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a conversation by telephone with the local authority adviser. Inspectors met with a group of pupils informally and spoke to pupils in the playground.
- Inspectors took into account a wide range of published information. They looked at school improvement plans, and records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also looked at minutes from governing body meetings and information showing how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 56 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the 51 free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally during the inspection. The views of staff were considered by analysing the 18 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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