

Arunside School, Horsham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125883
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315340
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2008
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)	155
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	Diana Searle
Headteacher	Carol Slight
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackbridge Lane Horsham RH12 1RR
Telephone number	01403 263919
Fax number	01403 242943

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. The large majority of pupils are of White British background, but the number from minority ethnic groups has been increasing. There has been a sharp rise in the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with half the pupils now identified as having additional learning needs. Mobility has also been rising. In addition to those who join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), an above average number of pupils leave and join Arunside partway through their primary education. The headteacher was appointed in January 2007 after a period as acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Arunside provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Where school leaders have been particularly successful is in creating a stimulating learning environment where pupils are looked after well and so feel safe, happy and keen to learn. Parents rightly praise what they describe as the school's 'strong links with the local community' and the way staff 'encourage a caring and responsible attitude'. As one commented, 'We have been very impressed with the way the school has brought all the children together whatever their social or educational starting point.' Despite these important strengths, leadership and management are satisfactory, because they have not focused with sufficient rigour on driving improvements in standards to match the high quality of care and the imaginative curriculum that the school provides.

From the start of EYFS through to the end of Year 6, the school has placed a major emphasis on the welfare and support of the pupils. Staff have also worked hard to create a curriculum that has helped to feed pupils' enthusiasm. Links between subjects are very strong, so that pupils get very engrossed in the topics they are studying and they get to apply literacy, numeracy, art and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to the work they do, for example on Victorians in Year 6 and Tudors in Year 3. A popular feature throughout the school is the 'take home tasks' where pupils typically use their design and technology skills to work with their parents to make models relevant to the topic being studied. The good curriculum has been an important element in pupils' enjoyment of school and their good personal development. Pupils know their personal targets, although not all marking gives them clear enough guidance on how they can improve their work.

School leaders monitor lessons and so have an accurate picture of what teaching is like at Arunside, but their observations do not home in enough on how well the pupils are learning and the progress that they are making. This contributes to school leaders' overly positive picture of the effectiveness of the teaching and of how well the school is performing overall. Although there have been improvements in other aspects of the school, standards are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection. After two years when they have been much lower, they are now broadly average. This represents satisfactory learning, progress and achievement, but, given pupils' enthusiasm, they ought to be doing better. Subject leaders are not all aware of Arunside's statutory targets and these are not being used to set measurable success criteria in the school's improvement plan. This limits the scope for governors to challenge the school over standards and achievement. Nonetheless, the school's success in creating such a positive learning environment shows its satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children who started in Reception this year have a markedly weaker profile of skills than children in previous years. Most skills are much lower than those found amongst children of a similar age whereas in most previous years children have joined the school with capabilities in line with or close to those expected for their ages.

The school has analysed individual needs swiftly. A high level of concern for children's welfare has resulted in a raft of measures which have ensured that children settle quickly and enjoy learning. At the end of this first term, personal and social skills are developing well and children play together harmoniously. Some are keen to talk about their work and about areas of healthy

lifestyles such as drinking milk and eating fruit. Parents are becoming increasingly involved in children's schoolwork because the school is encouraging them to take an interest.

Children have responded well to the recent change of teaching, due to maternity leave, and support staff provide good stability to ensure continuity. Although skills in communication and language are low, children are making satisfactory progress in these and other basic skills. Good improvements to the indoor and outdoor areas provide a stimulating environment to broaden children's experiences. Outside areas are safe and secure and leaders and managers ensure that a good variety of large and small play equipment provide ample opportunities for girls and boys to work and play together and individually. Staff encourage children properly to select from a range of different activities. They monitor choices carefully to ensure that the children experience an appropriate balance. Their careful tracking of children's developing skills provides a clear picture of children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus school leaders' monitoring of lessons on the progress that all pupils are making in their learning.
- Make more rigorous use of challenging whole-school targets to set clear, measurable success criteria in the school improvement plan so that governors and school leaders can readily gauge how well the school is doing.
- Ensure that all marking gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.

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 have been below average in the Year 2 assessments but pupils' current work in Years 1 and 2 shows that recent initiatives are beginning to show improvements, particularly in the quality of pupils' writing. At the time of the last inspection, standards in the Year 6 tests had been consistently above average. They fell sharply in 2007 and were even lower in 2008. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain broadly average standards. This represents satisfactory achievement, with pupils adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. The good support provided to the growing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to make similar progress to the others in their class. Some are helped to make good progress. The same is also true for those who join the school partway through their primary education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Because they benefit from such an exciting curriculum, pupils really enjoy their time at Arunside. As one parent commented wistfully, 'My daughter is looking forward to going to secondary school but will be sad to say goodbye to Arunside.' Pupils are often enthusiastic in lessons. They mostly listen well and usually settle to individual activities quickly and without fuss. Pupils behave and get on well together in a school where 'all children are taught to care for and value others'. Older pupils take their various responsibilities seriously, for example in looking out for the younger ones, and pupils of all ages take a particular pride in the part they have played in

winning the school its Eco Green Flag for 'all our composting and planting'. One boy expressed regret that inspectors had not come earlier in the year explaining that, 'This is the most beautiful school because of all the roses.' Pupils' involvement in the school and wider community is extensive. The pupils' campaigning on recycling and green issues has extended to work into and beyond the school grounds. As a result of the good arrangements for their welfare, pupils feel very safe at school and they also learn how to keep safe. Year 6 pupils, for example, learn cycling proficiency. Pupils have a good appreciation of the need for exercise and a healthy diet, and they prepared healthy vegetarian options at Year 3's 'Tudor banquet' that would have made Henry VIII blanch! Despite pupils' enthusiasm for school, their attendance and punctuality are only satisfactory. Some parents could do more to get their children to school regularly and on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils well and, in all lessons, good relationships help motivate pupils to try hard and do their best. Lessons are frequently well paced with varied activities that interest and engage the pupils. That is not always the case, however. Sometimes lesson introductions go on for too long, and that can lead to some pupils becoming restless and fidgety. Most lessons start with teachers setting out 'learning objectives', but sometimes these show the tasks that the pupils are to carry out rather than what it is that the pupils are expected to learn. Teaching assistants provide well-focused support for those pupils who need extra help with their learning. This enables them to make at least similar progress to their peers and, in some cases, to make good progress. The quality of teachers' marking varies. The best helps to move pupils' learning on but much only offers encouragement or just a record for the teacher of whether or not the work was unaided.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Recent improvements in linking subjects together through topics have resulted in greater enjoyment in areas such as writing and have helped to fire pupils' imagination. This is beginning to improve achievement. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, writing was related to a Greek myths project and the large proportion of boys in the class were well motivated to write about the attributes and characteristics of heroes, and even more so villains! Planning ensures continuity between year groups and that work properly matches the needs of pupils of different abilities. An extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities extends the learning opportunities for pupils. A delighted parent praised the 'fantastic opportunities my son has been offered to further develop his interest through visits'. The introduction of German and French in Years 3 to 6 is also helping to engage pupils' interest and broaden their horizons. Homework is generally used well to supplement the work done in school, but some parents of pupils in Years 1 and 2 voice concerns that the change of reading scheme this year resulted in a long period when pupils brought no books home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are highly committed to swift identification of individual pupils' needs and strong partnerships with outside agencies ensure that these are met, including the use of specialist initiatives where pupils are helped to express themselves through art. A very supportive learning environment, which celebrates all contributions, ensures that every pupil feels valued. This is particularly helping to raise the confidence and self-esteem of the many pupils who have a high level of need and those who join the school partway through their primary education. Safeguarding arrangements are good, so pupils are safe and secure. The school has worked hard and with some success in tackling incidences of persistent absence, although school leaders acknowledge that there is further to go in working with parents to improve attendance and punctuality. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that their progress at least matches their peers. Older pupils know their individual targets but the school recognises that not all know how to move themselves forward towards these because marking and written advice do not always guide them clearly enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders have created a positive learning environment where pupils are happy and keen to learn. They have ensured that strong teamwork between staff is helping to meet the needs of the increasing number of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Considerable effort has been put into better involving parents in their children's education and this has been much appreciated, for example parents were grateful for the recent curriculum evening on mathematics. The school's involvement in the local community and its success in extending pupils' awareness of other beliefs and ways of life show Arunside's good contribution to community cohesion. School leaders acknowledge that their focus on pupils' academic achievement has been less strong. This is improving with the introduction of better systems for tracking pupils' progress. However, monitoring does not focus enough on the progress that pupils are making in lessons and over time, and school leaders are not making sufficient use of challenging targets to drive up achievement. Targets in the school improvement plan lack precision and do not provide governors and school leaders with a sharp enough tool for driving achievement and gauging success. Governors are supportive but they have not done enough to challenge the school on standards and achievement. Several of the governors are new to their roles and are keen to contribute more, so have arranged further training.

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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are 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?	3
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	1
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?	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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Arunside School, Horsham, RH12 1RR

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and seeing all the exciting things you are learning about. I was sorry I wasn't able to dress up and accept Year 3's invitation to the Tudor banquet but unfortunately I forgot to bring my doublet and hose!

Arunside is giving you a satisfactory education and there are many aspects of the school that are good. The way staff take good care of you and the exciting curriculum are among the things that are helping you to feel safe and happy at school. We were very pleased to see such good behaviour and the friendly way in which you get on with and help each other. We were especially impressed with the responsibilities you take on in the school and beyond. You are certainly proud of helping the school to win its Eco Green Flag. We were sorry to see, though, that some of you miss school unnecessarily and come in late. You must try harder, and get your parents to help you, to get to school regularly and on time.

You are making reasonable progress with your work but you are all now so keen to learn that we think you should be doing better. We have asked that, when school leaders visit your lessons, they look particularly to check how much progress you are all making in your learning. Many of you know and refer to your personal targets in English and mathematics, but we could see that not all of the teachers' marking is giving you clear enough pointers on how to make your work better. This is something we have asked the school to improve. You can all help too by reading and following your teachers' comments.

Your headteacher, staff and governors have been particularly successful in creating such a stimulating place for you to learn. We know that they want to work together to make your school even better and we have suggested that, when they plan improvements, they set out measurable success criteria based on expectations of you achieving higher standards in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector