

Southover CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114510
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	363821
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Taplin
Headteacher	Steve Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
School address	Potters Lane Lewes BN7 1JP
Telephone number	01273 473015
Fax number	01273 487212
Email address	office@southover.e-sussex.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 19 lessons, with 12 teachers being seen. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 138 questionnaires from parents and carers, 20 from staff and 99 from pupils in Key Stage 2.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well pupils progress in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2, and in writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.
- How well pupils know about and consider life beyond Lewes.
- The effectiveness of teaching at providing the right level of challenge.
- The role subject leaders play in self-evaluation and driving improvement.

Information about the school

Most pupils come to this larger than average sized primary school from the local community. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School accreditation and an Activemark for its work in sport.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils are rightly proud of this good school where they flourish both socially and academically. Pupils' achievement is outstanding because teaching is good and they are cared for and supported extremely well.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and then build on this well in the rest of the school. Consequently, pupils' attainment is high by the end of Year 6. Steps taken by leaders to tackle a slight downward trend in attainment in mathematics have been effective and pupils' progress in this subject is now good across the school. Recent projects such as 'Talk for Writing', and a focus on ensuring that there is a more structured approach to introducing letter sounds, have ensured that good progress in writing is being maintained. Pupils quickly acquire new skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Pupils feel very safe. They very keenly take on responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. For example, school councillors have made a highly impressive contribution to environmental awareness by helping the school to recycle in a more cost-effective way. Most pupils greatly enjoy school, especially the very large number of clubs. These reflect the willingness of staff to go the extra mile to make learning exciting.

The curriculum fosters creativity very imaginatively. Pupils produce high quality artwork and take part in a very wide range of musical activities such as singing in the 'Big Sing' Christmas concert. In Key Stage 1, good links are made between different subjects, and teaching consistently meets differing needs. This is also the case in most lessons in Key Stage 2 but, in a small number of classes, especially in science and history, work sometimes lacks challenge because pupils do the same thing whatever their ability.

There are good systems for evaluating school effectiveness. This means that senior leaders are able to identify and tackle weaknesses quickly, which gives the school a good capacity for further improvement. Leaders have demonstrated this in the way that they have improved attainment and achievement since the last inspection and have effectively tackled small dips in progress in mathematics and writing over the last year. Subject leaders are keen and enthusiastic. They play a good part in driving school improvement but are given too few opportunities to visit lessons. The school already has plans in place to tackle this so that subject leaders are able to contribute fully to self-evaluation and to improving teaching and learning and ironing out inconsistencies in the curriculum.

Leaders have established very effective partnerships with others to support learning and to maintain high quality care for pupils who need additional help. The school engages extremely well with parents and carers. They are regularly consulted and are kept well

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informed about how they can help their children. This helps them to make a very positive contribution to their children's learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that work always provides the right level of challenge for all pupils, especially in subjects such as science and history in Key Stage 2.
- Strengthen self-evaluation by giving subject leaders more opportunities to visit lessons to monitor teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of school are both excellent. This means that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils' enthusiasm and positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to the good and sometimes outstanding progress that is seen in most lessons. In a good literacy lesson, pupils were fully engaged and made good progress as they learnt how to use similes to bring their poems alive. They worked enthusiastically and responded well to the high expectations of the teacher. In a good numeracy lesson, pupils worked hard and cooperated sensibly as they explored different types of graphs. Pupils were fully engaged and acquired new skills quickly because learning was made purposeful as they looked at line graphs that showed how noise levels in school changed according to the time of day. On the few occasions where progress in lessons is slower, it is because work does not provide the right level of challenge for all. For example, in one mathematics lesson, the most able pupils spent too long consolidating knowledge rather than moving on in their learning.

Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. They are given good support both in and out of lessons and participate enthusiastically in all activities.

Pupils become good young citizens. They behave well and are polite and courteous. They develop a good knowledge of life beyond Lewes. For example, they show good consideration for the needs of others by organising fundraising activities and are respectful of different lifestyles. Pupils are very appreciative of the wide range of sporting opportunities provided in lessons and clubs and they often make sensible choices about what they are going to eat at lunchtimes. The school has a well-deserved Activemark award as well as Healthy School accreditation for its work in fostering healthy lifestyles.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school provides very high quality care and support to all pupils. Adults know every pupil and treat them all as part of the 'school family'. Pupils who are finding work difficult are quickly given extra help to get them back on track and there is very effective liaison with outside agencies when it is needed. There are good transition arrangements and older pupils feel that they are being well prepared for their move to secondary school.

Teachers plan and prepare very thoroughly for lessons. There is a good pace to learning in most lessons and teachers use interactive whiteboards and other resources to bring subjects alive and engage pupils. Teachers have good systems for assessing pupils' learning. Good use is made of this information to plan the next stages in learning, although there are still a few occasions when work is not pitched at the right level for groups of differing abilities, especially in history and science in some Key Stage 2 classes. Teachers give pupils regular feedback in lessons about how well they are doing. Marking and the use of targets are most effective in English, where they give a clear picture of next steps in learning. This is less well established in other subjects.

The curriculum provides pupils with many exciting experiences. For example, pupils speak very positively about a recent international week which they say helped them to learn about other cultures. Clubs support pupils' personal development extremely well, and give them opportunities to try different activities such as fencing and learning to speak Spanish. Links between subjects are developing well but are not yet consistently strong

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across the school. They are better in Key Stage 1, where there are many opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in different subjects. In Key Stage 2, there is good practice in most classes but occasionally an overuse of uninspiring worksheets or copy writing restricts pupils' opportunities to write purposefully or to work independently.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The calm and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher set a clear direction for school improvement. Their good ambitions and drive for improvement are firmly embedded because teamwork is very strong. There is a good understanding of remaining priorities, including the need to let subject leaders observe more lessons so that they can take a greater part in leading and managing teaching and learning. The governing body provides good challenge to the school and is clear about what leaders need to do next to improve provision further.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination successfully. Senior leaders make good use of data to check the progress of different groups and they are doing the right things to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 have access to the same high quality curriculum all of the time. There is no discrimination, because pupils learn to respect and understand different beliefs. This helps the school to make a good contribution to community cohesion. Leaders are very responsive to local needs and work very closely with parents. Following a recent audit, leaders are now establishing links with a school in Brighton to strengthen provision in this area even further.

The school has good safeguarding procedures. Leaders ensure that pupils and adults are able to work in a safe and secure environment.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good teaching means that children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although there is some variation from year to year, most children are working at the levels expected for their age when they start school. Children build well on this and in most years their attainment is above average by the end of the Reception Year. Children are very well cared for and this helps them to settle quickly when they first start school. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons, with children working together happily and sensibly selecting for themselves where they are going to work. This means that children quickly develop high levels of confidence and independence. Adults have good expectations and teachers' planning takes good account of differing needs in lessons. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well and children learn especially quickly when being taught as a group, or, for example, when practising number recognition. Adults provide good challenge at these times. When children are working independently, there are a few occasions when there are missed opportunities to move learning on more quickly.

Leaders monitor progress closely and any comparative areas of weakness, such as a recent dip in attainment in writing, are tackled rigorously so that children quickly get back on track. Work to improve outdoor learning is beginning to have a positive effect. However, the location of the larger of the two outdoor areas means that it is not yet used well enough to support work in all of the areas of learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a relatively high return of questionnaires. Most parents and carers are very pleased with the work of the school. Positive comments included, 'My children have been challenged and have been made to feel safe and happy' and 'Our children skip to school, enjoy their time there and thrive.' Some parents and carers are concerned about how well differing needs are met, especially for pupils identified as being gifted and talented. Inspectors found that whilst there is good challenge in most lessons, support beyond the classroom for gifted and talented pupils is still being developed. The school has also identified this and further improvements in provision for these pupils already appear on the current year's development plan as a priority.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southover CE Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 138 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 321 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	61	46	33	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	82	59	52	38	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	52	38	73	53	11	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	49	55	40	10	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	79	57	52	38	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	46	66	48	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	41	71	51	6	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	68	49	55	40	6	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	43	63	46	12	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	39	71	51	2	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	36	71	51	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	96	70	39	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	62	43	31	7	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



10 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southover CE Primary School, Lewes BN7 1JP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about your work. You were very polite and friendly. We agree with you that your school is good and that you learn new things quickly.

Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

- Children in the Reception classes have settled very quickly and are making good progress.
- You are taught well in Years 1 to 6 and this helps you to make good progress.
- You feel very safe and are very happy at school. It is great that you are able to take part in so many fun things outside lessons.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and you make an excellent contribution to the community. We are particularly impressed by the efforts of the school council.
- All of the adults in the school look after you well. They give you effective help when you are struggling with your work.
- The school is well led and managed, and all of the adults are working very hard to make the school even better.

This is what we have now asked your school to do next.

- It should make sure that there is always enough challenge for you in all lessons, especially in science and history in Years 3 to 6.
- It should give teachers who are in charge of subjects more opportunities to visit lessons so that they can see how well you are doing.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper Lead inspector

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