

Simon de Senlis Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121954
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359130
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Campbell

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	382
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Giancarlo Teriaca
Headteacher	Elliot Howles
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 16 teachers and 19 lessons. Four lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and pupils. They also spoke informally to parents and carers. They observed the work of the school and looked at a wide range of documentation including information about the progress of different groups of pupils, child protection and safeguarding procedures. They looked at pupils' past and present work and scrutinised 150 questionnaires completed by pupils and 146 by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Attainment in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- The rate of progress of different groups of pupils, particularly all the girls and the more-able boys and girls.
- The consistency of the quality of teaching after a period of high staff turnover.
- The rigour and precision of leaders and the governing body when monitoring the impact of initiatives to raise standards, particularly in priority areas.

Information about the school

Simon de Senlis is a larger than average school that serves a residential community on the outskirts of the town. Most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased considerably since the previous inspection and is currently slightly above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school manages a specially resourced provision on site for 12 pupils with speech, language and moderate learning difficulties. Consequently, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. Pupils have access, before and after school, to a privately managed Senlis Scallywags club that operates on the school site.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Simon de Senlis is a satisfactory school and is improving. There are many notable strengths, particularly in the care, guidance and support provided for pupils, resulting in good personal development. Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy school. Parents and carers rightly appreciate the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As one Reception child's parent commented, 'My little boy has taken to the start of his education wonderfully. There is no question that this is because of the teachers and facilities on offer.' The integration of pupils from the Designated Special Provision unit into classes is also an area of strength that benefits the whole school community. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and are the major driving force behind improvement. They have created a climate where staff share the same ambitions for improving the school.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress from their starting points and typically reach average standards by the time they leave. Pupils within the Designated Special Provision unit make good progress from their low starting points due in part to the good ratio of adults to pupils. Leadership and management of the unit are also good, ensuring the right learning environment for these pupils to enjoy success. Attainment is rising in Key Stage 1. Initiatives, such as encouraging greater enthusiasm for writing, have contributed to the improvement. An upward trend in English is evident in pupils' work throughout the school. The picture has not been as positive in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, and the school is now raising the profile of the subject to secure improvement. Until recently, some of the more-able pupils, particularly the girls, did not reach standards of which they were capable, because not enough was asked of them. The introduction of improved tracking systems now identifies signs of underachievement much earlier. As a result, pupils often make good progress in their current work because tasks more accurately match their ability. Even so, not enough pupils reach higher levels in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but is not consistently better than this to ensure good learning and progress throughout the school. Some teachers move pupils' learning on at a brisk pace; others do not have high enough expectations. Occasionally, in teachers' quest to make activities interesting and exciting, the focus on what pupils should be learning gets lost. Although many teachers use assessment information well to accelerate learning, pupils do not always know how to move to the next step. The new creative curriculum provides richness and diversity that motivates pupils well. Opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and, to a lesser extent, numeracy skills in other subjects are becoming a more integral part of learning, but are not consistently provided. The wealth of opportunities provided to support potentially vulnerable pupils and families is a major factor in the good care, guidance and support offered by the school. The

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excellent work of the pastoral team effectively encourages pupils to attend regularly and participate fully in school life.

Through the drive and determination of the headteacher, the staff and good-quality local authority support, the school is currently moving forward at a good pace. The school is reflective and honest in self-evaluating its performance and has an accurate view of what needs to be done. The monitoring of teaching although satisfactory sometimes lacks focus and precision. The governing body is well organised and highly supportive of the school but does not always have enough insight into whether the school's performance is good enough. From the improvements made, particularly the upturn in English standards and the current improvement in mathematics, the school shows it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - making full use of assessment information to ensure more-able pupils are consistently challenged in their work
 - focusing with greater precision on the day-to-day quality of learning of individual pupils, especially the more able
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills in other subjects
 - raising the profile of mathematics across the school.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - developing a more consistent approach towards marking so that pupils know whether they are making enough progress and what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation role of leaders, including the governing body, by:
 - ensuring monitoring focuses with greater precision on measuring the impact of initiatives on learning outcomes for all groups of pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils typically start school with a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding that are broadly at levels expected of children at this age. They make good progress and most move into Year 1 having achieved the Early Learning Goals. In Key Stages 1 and 2, rates of progress have been uneven and there has been a legacy of underachievement. Inspection evidence shows that initiatives, such as tighter monitoring, are having a positive effect on pupils' progress. Targeted intervention for individual pupils in Key Stage 2 is also starting to raise standards in mathematics. Pupils from minority ethnic groups

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make as much progress as others because they feel valued, enabling them to enjoy success through increased confidence.

Although pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, they make good progress in small group activities. At these times, the work and support they receive is more accurately focused on their individual needs, enabling them to progress well and at the level of those pupils in the Designated Special Unit. A good example of this was seen when a group of pupils was presented with sentences that needed improvement. By the end of the lesson, not only had pupils completed the task, but many were able to read their final version without help.

Current work shows that, through greater challenge, pupils are working at higher levels than last year. A good example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson when more-able pupils were learning about the area of triangles. Boys and girls were equally challenged by the warm-up activity designed to develop mathematical vocabulary. They enjoyed taking responsibility for choosing activities, with the right level of challenge, based on their own understanding. Learning was well matched to individual needs and was successful because both boys and girls wanted to succeed.

Pupils of all ages value their school. Parents and carers are unanimous in their view that their children feel safe. Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Pupils relish opportunities for taking responsibility by for example, becoming junior road safety officers. The high uptake on good quality extra-curricular clubs successfully promotes a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils' good contribution to the school and wider community is demonstrated well by their involvement in organising numerous activities themselves. They recognise that there are others less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise money for good causes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' creative and artistic talents are particularly strong. The school capitalises well on its increasing diversity of cultures, enabling pupils to gain a secure understanding of life in a multicultural society. By the time pupils leave, their good personal development, combined with satisfactory academic skills, ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
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?

Teachers' planning is often detailed, but does not always pay sufficient attention to ensuring activities provide the right level of challenge for the more-able pupils. A strong feature of many lessons is pupils' positive attitudes, enabling successful learning. However, the pace of learning varies, particularly when teachers talk for too long, leaving pupils with little time to practise skills. There is some uncertainty among pupils about whether they make enough progress. Marking does not always build on pupils' past knowledge in order to ensure the right level of challenge.

Weekly 'excellence arena' opportunities enable pupils to experience high quality learning activities, such as street dance or guitar lessons. In discussion, pupils greatly appreciate the curricular opportunities on offer and levels of enjoyment are high. 'Home learning tasks' are also starting to support class learning effectively but are not used consistently in all classes. Residential trips, such as Year 4's imminent visit to Warwick Castle, make a strong, positive contribution towards pupils' social development. However, there is still further to go before the new curriculum is embedded firmly enough to have a measurable impact on pupils' achievement.

High levels of commitment to pupils' welfare ensure they are happy. Parents and carers are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after. Effective procedures help pupils to transfer smoothly at the end of Year 6 and good attendance is fostered tenaciously. Strong links with outside agencies, including the Senlis Scallywags club,

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ensure potentially vulnerable pupils often make significant gains in their personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The relatively new leadership team successfully embeds ambition through its clear vision for raising school performance. Strategic planning accurately identifies areas in most need and is increasingly underpinned by more precise data analysis of pupils' achievement. Purposeful monitoring has led to improvements in the quality of teaching, although inconsistencies remain. Monitoring and evaluation sometimes lack rigour and precision, particularly when measuring the impact of initiatives on learning. The governing body oversees areas such as safeguarding well. In other areas, most notably academic standards, their overview is less well developed. Safeguarding procedures are secure, meet requirements and follow good practice. Child protection procedures are particularly robust. In many respects, the school is a strongly inclusive community but the fact that more-able pupils do not always achieve standards in line with their ability, means that equality of opportunity is satisfactory rather than good. Discrimination is tackled particularly effectively through pupils' shared involvement with their Designated Special Provision unit friends during afternoon lessons. Community cohesion is good. The school knows the community it serves well and fosters good understanding at a national and international level through links with pupils from as far afield as Mexico and Australia. Residential visits to France also greatly extend pupils' awareness of different societies.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the strong focus on children's personal, social and emotional development effectively establishes firm foundations for good personal outcomes. The school fosters good relationships with families, enabling parents and carers to become involved in their children's learning right from the start. Routines are well established, ensuring children settle quickly. Children experience an exciting range of fun-learning opportunities. There is a good balance of independent and adult-led activities. The outdoor learning area is a great source of enjoyment but its layout sometimes restricts children's freedom to choose whether to work indoors or outside. The good ratio of adults to children ensures those in need of extra support flourish through effective one-to-one attention. Children gain a good understanding of eating healthily and keeping fit. Teaching is always of good quality and staff work together well as a team. Assessment is good and 'All About Me' books provide valuable insight into the progress of individual children. Children have a good understanding of their next steps to learning because work is marked well. Leadership and management are good; the coordinator has effectively embedded a strong, shared commitment towards improvement.

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	2

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very positive and supportive of the school. They particularly like:

- their children's enjoyment of school and the fact they feel safe
- how well the school prepares their children for the future
- the good quality of teaching.

A few have concerns. Most notably, a small minority of parents and carers feel that:

- their children are not making enough progress.

The lead inspector spoke with key staff about all concerns raised in parents' and carers' written comments. The inspection team found the quality of teaching to be satisfactory rather than good. With regard to pupils making enough progress, it found that most pupils make satisfactory progress, but some more-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could. Communication with parents and carers about their child's progress is recognised as an on-going area for development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Simon de Senlis Primary 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 146 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 382 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	54	57	39	6	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	94	64	52	36	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	48	33	86	59	9	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	34	80	55	16	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	39	77	53	6	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	37	77	53	8	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	32	85	58	11	8	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)	42	29	81	55	5	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	31	83	57	9	6	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	27	93	64	9	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	30	81	55	11	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	56	38	79	54	7	5	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	47	63	43	11	8	3	2

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



9 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Simon de Senlis Primary School, Northampton NN4 0PH

Thank you for looking after us so well when we visited your school. Your attendance is really good and most of you say you like the work you do. You get on well with each other, both in lessons and in the playground. You try hard to eat healthily and keep fit. You like the grown-ups who teach you and look after you. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and looking at some of the work you have done in your books.

You go to a satisfactory school. It is improving all the time. There are many things of which you should be very proud. We particularly liked your special World Book Week assembly on our first day when everyone was dressed up. It was great fun and showed how much you enjoy your time in school and how your teachers try to make learning fun.

However, not everyone makes as much progress as they could, particularly those of you who find numeracy easier. I have asked those in charge to help you by giving you harder work. I want to make sure you know how to improve when you have your work marked and make sure that you have plenty of time to practise your numeracy skills in other subjects. You have some good teachers in school and we want all the teaching to be as good as theirs so that you can all make good progress. Your headteacher and some of your teachers and governors are going to check more carefully on whether you are doing well enough.

You can help your school to improve by keeping up that good attendance and making sure you always try to do your best.

My best wishes to you all

Yours sincerely

Kath Campbell
Lead Inspector

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