

Sea Mills Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135779
Local Authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	360748
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ken Bush

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Sanders
Headteacher	Marilyn Bryant
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons taught by nine teachers. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the headteacher, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning documentation, assessment information, examples of pupils' work and a number of policy documents. The team received and considered 54 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with 71 from pupils and eight from school staff.

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

- How is the school addressing the issue of below average attainment at Key Stage 2, notably in writing?
- Is there evidence that previously low attendance is now improving?
- Are teaching and assessment improving rapidly enough, especially at Key Stage 2, to accelerate progress and secure better achievement?
- Are leadership and management at all levels, including governance, having a demonstrable impact upon improving outcomes for all pupils?

Information about the school

Sea Mills is slightly smaller than most primary schools. The school was formed in September 2009 as a result of an amalgamation and this is its first inspection. All pupils are currently accommodated on the site of the former Sea Mills Infants School until a new-build primary school is constructed. Most pupils are of White British heritage and only a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below the national average; these needs are related mainly to moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of one Nursery class and one Reception class. The school has Healthy Schools accreditation.

The school hosts some pupils from a local special school who are taught in separate inclusion classes. However, a few Sea Mills pupils join these classes for some lessons. The school runs a breakfast club managed by the governing body. There is also a Children's Centre nearby which works closely with Sea Mills, although it was not within the remit of this inspection.

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

Sea Mills Primary provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Since the school was established, frequent changes in senior leadership have prevented provision and outcomes for pupils improving as quickly as had been anticipated. However, with greater stability now in place, the school is gradually improving and all outcomes are at least satisfactory. Strengths of the school are pupils' knowledge, understanding and adoption of healthy lifestyles, which are good, reflecting the Healthy Schools status. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate with clear and appropriate plans for improvement in place. More rigorous quality assurance systems are starting to enable information about pupils' progress and other aspects of the school's work to be used more effectively. Although monitoring and evaluation procedures are still developing, leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, and the governing body, are now making a better overall contribution to raising levels of achievement. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

Pupils get off to a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress by the time they move on to secondary school at the end of Year 6. Rates of progress through the school are variable and are most rapid during Key Stage 1. Attainment is broadly average and rising in Key Stage 2 in both English and mathematics because of more timely and sharply focused interventions by teachers. Progress in reading has improved significantly across the school as a result of successful and well-managed strategies such as the Reading Recovery programme. Progress in writing has been slower partly because improvement strategies such as 'Every Child a Writer' have only recently been implemented, but also because pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects.

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory and are beginning to improve. No inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection but, equally, little teaching seen was consistently engaging or promoted progress that was better than satisfactory. Currently, the extent of challenge in lessons is sometimes too low and assessment information is not routinely used well enough to plan lessons that match tasks effectively to pupils' different needs and capabilities. There is an adequate and appropriate focus on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise them independently. There were some examples of effective marking seen in the inspection with judicious use of praise and useful advice for pupils on how to improve their work. However, such good practice was not evident in all classes. Moreover, pupils report that they are not always given sufficient time to read and act upon written comments and other feedback, nor often given explicit encouragement to do so.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly, but not exclusively, in writing, by:
 - ensuring that tasks are consistently well matched to pupils' needs and capabilities and provide sufficient challenge
 - increasing pupils' opportunities to work independently and to write at length in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that marking and other feedback are of consistently good quality across the school and that pupils are given time and encouragement to make good use of it in order to improve their work.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures by leaders at all levels and the governing body in order to rapidly improve outcomes for all pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

From just below average starting points, most pupils enjoy their learning and develop confidence when they are given opportunities to acquire and develop basic skills in lessons that are interesting and well structured. For example, in a successful Year 5 English lesson, which was not typical of those seen during the inspection, pupils actively experimented with a range of different ways to extend their sentence construction based on their reading of a challenging text, 'The Magician's Nephew'. Consequently, in this lesson, most pupils made good progress. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is, like that of other pupils, including the more able, at least satisfactory, and, in a few cases, better. While there are small variations in different subjects and year groups, boys and girls make progress at a similar rate. Broadly average attainment in key subjects, including in information and communication technology (ICT), together with rapidly improving attendance and a developing understanding of the world of work, lead to pupils being satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and for adult life.

Pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school as seen during the inspection, is satisfactory and improving, partly as a result of the 'Going for Gold' incentive scheme. However, in their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils did not regard good behaviour as a strength of the school. Most pupils report feeling safe and that instances of bullying are rare and effectively dealt with by staff. Pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including regarding e-safety, is developing, but not extensive. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. Most eat healthy lunches and the majority participate in the range of extra-curricular sporting activities offered. Some opportunities exist for pupils to exercise leadership roles within the school through taking on jobs such as delivering fruit to all classes and assisting with office duties, but these opportunities remain few; opportunities to engage with the local community are, at present, also limited. Pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly evident in lessons and assemblies. Pupils currently have some awareness of the variety of faiths and cultures to be found in other countries and in the United Kingdom, although plans are in place to develop this further in the near future by establishing links with more ethnically diverse areas within Bristol.

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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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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 have secure and improving subject knowledge, including increasingly in mathematics, where a recently implemented whole-school approach to calculation is showing positive indications of early impact. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, teachers set challenging tasks with clear learning objectives and had uniformly high expectations of all pupils. In less successful lessons, work was not planned sufficiently well to match different pupils' needs and capabilities, the teacher spoke for too long and there was a resulting decline in pace and pupils' engagement. Marking, although inconsistent across the school, is satisfactory and is strongest in Years 5 and 6. The school is also taking secure early steps to develop pupils' capacity for self-assessment by making increasing use of success criteria to help pupils know what they have learned and what they need to do next to improve.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and meets the needs of most pupils. Cross-curricular and ICT provision are gradually developing and are increasingly planned as part of coherent programmes of study. However, the curriculum is largely content-driven and, consequently, some opportunities are missed to develop basic and wider key skills in broader contexts and ensure skill progression across different subjects. Similarly, visits and trips make a useful overall contribution to the curriculum but they are not yet consistently integrated into medium- and long-term planning. Extra-curricular provision is

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a relative strength, particularly in physical education and sport where the school enjoys fruitful links with the local secondary school.

Support for pupils whose circumstances render them vulnerable, for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language is largely effective, enabling them to feel secure and to make comparable progress to their peers. The deployment of teaching assistants is at least satisfactory. Systems for ensuring effective exchange of information, including, where necessary, with external agencies, are in place but are not always consistently applied. However, systems for promoting regular attendance and good punctuality are now robust and have contributed to rapidly improved attendance in the present academic year from a low base in 2009/10. Provision in the breakfast club is adequate but not yet well developed. Pupils are not given sufficient encouragement to take responsibility for activities or the smooth-running of the facility.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

After a difficult start when the new school was first created, senior leaders are now beginning to provide a clear sense of direction to inform its future development, as seen in its coherent and realistic improvement plan. Parents and carers and the majority of staff express confidence in the leadership of the school. Mechanisms to track pupils' progress more systematically are now in place and are starting to be used to greater effect by leaders and by class teachers to raise pupils' expectations of themselves, and to intervene more effectively when pupils fall behind. Monitoring and evaluation are still largely the preserve of senior leaders, although subject leaders are gradually growing in confidence and leadership capacity, and are increasingly taking more of a lead in the coordination of professional development and the dissemination of effective practice.

Although the governing body has not yet developed its monitoring and evaluation role fully either, it is actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school, and is starting to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance more effectively; its role in strategic planning is still relatively underdeveloped, but improving. The governing body has ensured that inclusive practice and equal opportunities are clearly promoted and discrimination is tackled vigorously. Inspection evidence shows that achievement and other outcomes for different groups of pupils are routinely monitored by senior leaders and, to a lesser extent, by the governing body. Safeguarding arrangements, including those relating to staff and governor training, are in line with statutory requirements and are regularly reviewed. Pupils' involvement in helping to develop a broader approach to

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safeguarding is at an early stage. The school's satisfactory contribution to the promotion of community cohesion is evident in its increasing links with groups in the local and wider communities, including church groups. However, evaluation of its planned activities is still at an early stage and is, consequently, uneven.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Nursery class from a range of starting points in terms of prior attainment, but most are lower than age-related expectations. As a result of clear assessment procedures, their different needs and capabilities quickly become apparent to staff and they receive appropriate individual attention. Consequently, most children are ready for more structured learning by the time they start in the Reception class. Children display mostly positive attitudes and develop sound basic learning and social skills; outcomes overall are satisfactory. Staff generally make good use of the learning and play facilities and other resources and organise the children's activities appropriately. However, much of the planning tends to be activity- rather than learning-focused and consequently, activities are not consistently well matched to need and aptitude. Satisfactory but improving leadership and management ensure that induction arrangements for new or relatively inexperienced staff are well planned and regularly reviewed, and they receive appropriate support. Liaison with the local authority is effective. Personal contact with parents and carers is maintained on a daily basis, which enables any emerging issues or concerns to be dealt with expediently.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was similar to that found for most primary schools. A very large majority are supportive of, and appreciate, the efforts made by staff and the governing body to create a successful new school at Sea Mills. One parent commented, 'My child enjoys Sea Mills and has progressed very quickly with her reading, writing and mathematics. The teachers support her interests and help to develop them.' Several parents and carers commented on how pleased they were with the Reading Recovery scheme. There were only a very few comments from parents and carers that expressed any explicit criticisms of the school and no single issue was identified as a cause for concern from parents and carers as a whole.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sea Mills 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 191 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	67	16	30	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	61	21	39	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	48	26	48	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	50	22	41	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	54	21	39	2	4	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	43	29	54	1	0	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	43	29	54	0	0	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)	18	33	28	52	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	50	21	39	5	9	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	28	30	56	8	15	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	31	33	61	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	30	31	57	6	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	56	22	41	2	4	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	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.



21 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sea Mills Primary School, Bristol BS9 2NT

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons, and meeting with some of you, and hearing your views about your school.

We have found that yours is a satisfactory school. These are our main findings.

- The standards in English and mathematics reached by the end of Year 6 are similar to most other primary schools, and you make satisfactory progress.
- Most of you feel safe at school and behaviour is improving.
- Attendance is much better in this school year than last year.
- You have good knowledge and understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle and put this into practice by taking part in many sporting activities.
- Teaching and the curriculum are both satisfactory.
- Your school is satisfactorily led and managed, and your headteacher and the governing body have clear plans for how it can get better.

The headteacher agrees with the inspection team that pupils could achieve more at school and we have asked that:

- pupils achieve higher standards of work and make faster progress, particularly, but not only, in writing
- more opportunities are given to write at greater length in different subjects
- teachers plan pupils' work more carefully so that it is better matched to their different abilities, and that more lessons are challenging to keep pupils interested
- pupils have more opportunities to work on their own
- marking is of good quality for all classes, and that pupils are given time and encouragement to read teachers' comments so they know how to improve
- school leaders and the governing body monitor how pupils are progressing more closely.

All of you can play your part by continuing to attend regularly and by trying your best in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Ken Bush

Lead inspector

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