

Seven Fields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126242
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	364002
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Roberts
Headteacher	Zita McCormick
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Seventeen lessons or part lessons were observed, taught by 16 different teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the headteacher. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's records of pupils' attainment and progress, school policies including safeguarding documentation, and the school development plan. In addition, questionnaires from 73 parents and carers, 100 pupils and 33 staff were analysed.

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

- The effectiveness of strategies to improve pupils' attainment, particularly in English at Key Stage 2 and for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The accuracy of teachers' assessments and the use of assessment information to plan further steps in learning.
- The effectiveness of support for those pupils with particularly low levels of prior attainment.
- The impact of actions taken by school leaders and managers to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

This school is larger in size than most other primary schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and nearly all live close to the school. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. Their needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery class. The school gained the Healthy Schools Plus award and International School award in 2010. In January 2010, the school moved into new purpose-built buildings after spending much time in temporary accommodation.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The key strength of this outstanding school is the exemplary pastoral care that it offers. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, they are confident, well-rounded young people, ready to play their full part in the world beyond school. Almost all parents and carers are supportive and even those who have some criticisms recognise that their children love coming to school. One parent reflected the views of many when saying, 'My children always go to school excited and always come home happy.' Pupils cherish the new building, which contains wonderful examples of pupils' impressive work in every nook and cranny.

The driving force behind the school's success is undoubtedly the dedicated headteacher. She leads the school with unflagging enthusiasm and determination. However, she does not work in isolation and, as one member of staff explained, 'She encourages everyone in this school to be creative in their own way.'

Pupils enjoy school and learning greatly and develop very well as articulate, courteous and considerate young people, extremely well aware of how to lead safe and healthy lives. A very positive atmosphere permeates the school, relationships are exceptionally strong and this, together with excellent care, guidance and support, results in very happy learners. Pupils support a wide range of national and global charities and are always concerned to take care of the environment. They feel extremely safe in the school due to secure safeguarding procedures and consistent and effective behaviour management. Children get a good start in the Nursery. The extremely wide range of stimulating activities provided means that children make good progress. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average and is getting better year on year. All pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points when they joined the school and all groups achieve well. Relatively fewer pupils reach the higher levels in English and mathematics, however, because in some lessons, staff have not fine-tuned the use of assessment information sufficiently. As a result, tasks do not always provide maximum challenge for the more-able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very good support both in class and in small group or individual tuition sessions, which enables them to make good and sometimes excellent progress in their learning.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are strong. As a result, teaching is good and improving steadily. Teachers mark books carefully and regularly and the advice teachers give to pupils on how to improve their work is effective. Most pupils, therefore, are clear about the next steps in their learning. The exciting and extremely well-planned curriculum brings together topics and subjects to enliven learning and make it highly relevant and engaging. Pupils' very strong enjoyment of school, however, is not reflected in the overall attendance rate, which, although rising as a result of actions by the school, is still only average.

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Even though the school has many outstanding features already, staff and the governing body know that there is still more that can be done to lift pupils' attainment and attendance even further. They know exactly what actions to take next as a result of thorough systems of school self-evaluation. In view of the rapid improvements made in the last three years, outstanding leadership and management, the excellent curriculum and exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support that pupils receive, the school's capacity to sustain improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that, by June 2012, more pupils reach the higher levels in national tests at the end of Year 6 by ensuring that all teachers use assessment data to plan for and extend the learning of the highest attainers at a consistently challenging pace throughout lessons.
- Work more closely with the few parents and carers whose children do not attend regularly enough to ensure that pupils' overall rate of attendance is 96% or better by June 2012.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Children join the Nursery classes with low skills levels and abilities, particularly in the areas of language, communication and social skills. The work seen by inspectors confirms that pupils, including those with moderate learning difficulties and those with particularly low levels of prior attainment, are working broadly at the levels expected of them in English and mathematics. That represents good progress relative to their starting points in school. Key to that success is the introduction of rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress of each pupil towards challenging targets, coupled with good and often inspiring teaching. Consequently, the quality of learning in lessons is now good and sometimes outstanding. For instance, in an excellent Year 5/6 top-set literacy lesson, pupils were learning at a very rapid pace because of the teacher's exceptionally high expectations of what he wanted them to learn and the fun-filled, challenging tasks he set for them. Pupils are keen to do their best, work purposefully in lessons and enjoy what they are doing greatly. The enjoyment stems from the good rapport they have with each other and the teachers. Pupils' number problem-solving skills are very secure and have improved markedly since the last inspection because the school has worked very well to provide additional support for older pupils in mathematics. In a very fast paced Year 6 lower set numeracy lesson, all groups of pupils made excellent progress in developing their number skills and enjoyed working in pairs to complete the challenging task. However, there are occasions when higher attainers are not consistently challenged. Attainment in English is sometimes held back because some pupils have difficulty in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which in turn inhibits their ability to write well at the higher levels.

There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, because the school is very conscious of their individual needs. For example, the work is made interesting for both girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties, make similar progress to that of their classmates because of detailed support plans and timely interventions.

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Pupils explain the value of adopting healthy lifestyles and the need for exercise enthusiastically and knowledgeably, reflecting the Healthy School Plus award the school has gained. Pupils behave impeccably. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Consequently, the pupils have a highly developed understanding of right and wrong and a deep appreciation and enjoyment of the wonders of life around them. They take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in the community eagerly and are very well informed about other people's needs. Pupils develop impressive social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. That, together with secure and improving standards in the key skills of English and mathematics, means that pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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 exciting and well-planned curriculum is very well thought out so that pupils from all backgrounds can enjoy learning, achieve well and gain many skills which contribute to their outstanding personal development. Subjects are woven together extremely successfully. The carefully managed setting system in all years, coupled with regular and accurate assessment of pupils' progress, means that the curriculum is matched extremely well to the needs of each and every child. Classrooms glisten with wonderful displays of art work and computers enhance the quality of learning greatly. Well-supported, creative

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and educational activities outside the school day make a valuable contribution to pupils' high levels of enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support are exemplary in this school. Adults place pupils' well-being at the centre of their work and this makes the school a happy place to be. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school with particularly low levels of attainment is especially strong and helps them to achieve well. There are excellent partnerships with outside agencies to get additional support when it is needed and skilled teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution also to the learning of pupils who need extra help with their work. Induction programmes are outstanding for those who arrive throughout the year and those starting in the Nursery class. The school works extremely well with parents, carers, volunteers and a variety of external agencies to support those children potentially most at risk.

The quality of teaching and the engagement of staff with all pupils and their learning are good. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts are explained clearly and activities are designed carefully to challenge the pupils to learn at a swift pace. Pupils' levels of enjoyment and motivation are high because there is mutual respect between them and the teachers. High-quality teaching, such as that seen in a Year 2 literacy lesson when pupils were writing about 'how to make a flying potion', captivates and enthuses pupils and keeps them on their toes with provocative questioning and challenging tasks. Adults ask perceptive questions and these help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. Pupils have a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they need to do next in order to move forward. Learning is held back sometimes because all pupils in a class often work at the same pace, as directed by the teacher, and this leads to insufficient challenge for the most-able pupils.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear and unwavering vision for the school, which is supported and implemented by all staff. She communicates high expectations persuasively so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress is accelerating. Members of the senior leadership team and the subject leaders fulfil their responsibilities very well. Leaders check the school's performance rigorously and offer constructive advice and training. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is constantly improving. There is no hint of complacency and there is a determination from staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the many gains of recent years. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are

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high, but the school acknowledges that there are still a few pupils who could achieve even more, especially those who have previously attained highly. At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any discrimination and the school promotes equality for all pupils vigorously through sophisticated monitoring and exemplary support. Progress for all groups of pupils, given their different starting points, is broadly similar, indicating that the school's commitment to equal opportunities is translated effectively into practice.

The effectiveness of the governing body is good. It is able increasingly to hold the school to account for its work and has been influential in helping senior managers secure effective school improvement. It fulfils all legal requirements and all safeguarding arrangements were found to be effective at the time of the inspection. Good practice in safeguarding and child protection is evident in all areas of the school's work. For instance, checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough.

In this highly inclusive school, every child matters and individual needs are considered very specifically. The school works extremely well in partnership with external agencies to secure extra support for those pupils who need it. There is a strong commitment to the promotion of community cohesion. The principle of human rights is used as a baseline against which all curriculum planning and school developments are audited and policies are written. There is excellent involvement with the local community and a clear recognition that, although the school is situated in a predominantly White British community, every opportunity is taken to expand the pupils' understanding of the wider world through residential visits, visiting speakers, creative activities and the outstanding curriculum offered.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle into the Nursery class quickly, are keen to learn, play together readily and are well behaved. Provision for children's welfare is good. The excellent space for the youngest children is used to good effect. It is organised effectively and well resourced, bright, airy, safe and secure. Inside spaces are fresh and clean, with clearly marked labels on drawers and containers so that children can find and put away equipment independently. The outside area offers much opportunity for learning and is used well by adults to help develop children's climbing skills and physical development. The teachers and teaching assistants plan and organise activities well, but some could be enriched, such as those for creative role play or writing. Very good records are kept of children's achievements, in photographs, notes and samples of their work. The children move into Year 1 working securely towards their early learning goals and this represents good progress in relation to their starting points. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides good leadership to the team. She has a very secure understanding of the early years curriculum and reviews her practice constantly to ensure that all children are safeguarded and receive high-quality care and support.

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

About one quarter of parents and carers of pupils registered at the school responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. This is a lower-than-average return. The school, clearly, enjoys the confidence and support of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. A number of individual comments praised the extremely high quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils, particularly to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to the school. The few criticisms were followed up as inspection trails during the visit. For instance, while most parents and carers feel that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively, a small minority expressed concerns. The inspection findings are that behaviour is excellent in and around the school. Although a very few pupils do occasionally present challenging behaviour, this is dealt with very well. Any more-serious incidents, which are few and far between, are documented fully and parents and carers are informed and consulted. The views of the parents and carers interviewed informally at the beginning and end of the school day confirm the positive responses in the questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Seven Fields 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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 293 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	56	32	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	63	22	30	3	4	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	36	49	35	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	52	35	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	62	28	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	42	42	58	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	48	36	49	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)	37	51	30	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	52	32	44	1	1	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	45	30	41	8	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	40	35	48	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	41	36	49	5	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	47	39	53	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Seven Fields Primary School, Swindon SN2 5DE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so happily outside. You showed us how much you enjoy your lovely new school and we could see that you are proud of how well you are doing. You are right to be pleased, because yours is an outstanding school. Here are some of the good things we found out about it.

- You get off to a good start in the Nursery and you make good progress as you pass through the school. By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach standards in all your subjects that are similar to those in most other schools. This is because your teachers teach you well and you also work hard.
- You behave impeccably, both in class and out in the playground. You get on well with the other pupils and look after each other.
- The headteacher and all the staff work very hard to provide you with the best education possible. They take great care of you and want to see you all achieve the best that you possibly can. You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives and feel very safe in school.
- The teachers work hard to plan interesting lessons and always mark your work carefully.

Even though you go to an outstanding school, your headteacher, the governing body and staff want the school to get even better. To help the school improve further, we have asked those who lead and manage the school to do two things.

- Ensure that more of you reach the higher levels in the tests you take at the end of Year 6 by making sure that the work that is always just at the right level of challenge.
- Make sure that more of you attend school regularly and take fewer days off school.

You can help your school to do even better by always working as hard as you can and coming to school regularly. Good luck for the future. We hope you continue to enjoy school as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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