

Sonning Common Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123038
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	380578
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Million
Headteacher	Chris Hirst
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 22 lessons taught by 17 teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and pupils. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding policies and other documents. Questionnaires from 111 parents and carers, 30 members of staff and 104 pupils were scrutinised.

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

- The way teaching and the curriculum are increasing the progress of pupils, especially in mathematics.
- How and where teaching and assessment are not consistently good or better.
- School self-evaluation and the impact of leaders at all levels, including the governing body, in driving improvement in teaching, learning and pupils' progress.
- How care, guidance and support help pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to access learning and to enjoy school.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a few coming from other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has a below-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils have a range of needs, including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The school has received several awards, including the National Healthy Schools Award. The school has increased in size since the previous inspection and there have been several changes in senior leadership in the past two years. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes.

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

Pupils are keen to attend this satisfactory school. Enthusiastic members of staff help all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to enjoy learning. Good partnerships with parents and carers support the good care provided. One parent spoke for others by saying, 'I believe the school supports and nurtures the whole child.'

Children make a satisfactory start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They learn quickly when working with adults but are not always challenged enough when completing activities they have chosen for themselves. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory progress between Years 1 and 6, leading to broadly average attainment by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is uneven between classes and subjects because teachers do not always plan work that meets the pupils' diverse needs, particularly in mathematics. Teachers' marking is developing well in English, where there are constructive comments to extend learning, but this is less evident in mathematics. Pupils and their parents and carers appreciate the excellent extra-curricular activities provided by the school, including sport, forest school and French. These make a very strong contribution towards supporting pupils' good behaviour, cultural awareness and healthy lifestyles. Pupils are good at taking responsibility for tasks around the school and contributing to the local community. For example, their eco-awareness ensures that they are vigilant in turning off lights and appliances when not in use.

The senior leadership team has been restructured over the past year resulting in a renewed determination to raise attainment. Pupils' progress is being tracked more rigorously so that support can be targeted more precisely. Teachers are responsive towards advice on how they can improve. There are satisfactory procedures for self-evaluation which support the leaders' planning for improvement. Leaders, including the governing body, have gathered a wealth of information about provision and pupils' progress. This information is not fully evaluated so that areas for development can be sharply focused on the main priorities and that previous developments can be monitored for impact on provision and pupils' progress. Nevertheless, the school has halted the recent dip in attainment and has improved attainment in English by expanding opportunities for pupils to practise and extend writing across the curriculum. These improvements, together with the recent advance in pupils' progress, demonstrate satisfactory leadership and a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may

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receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that work always matches pupils' differing levels of ability
 - providing consistent guidance through teachers' marking on how pupils need to improve
 - providing greater opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum.
- Increase the rigour of self-evaluation and school development planning to demonstrate the impact of work completed on pupils' attainment and progress and to prioritise and pinpoint next steps in learning more precisely.
- Increase the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially when they are working on activities they have chosen for themselves, by ensuring that they are challenged to extend their ideas and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most children are working at levels typical for their age when they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils enjoy school and told the inspection team that they especially appreciate taking an active part in their learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do best in literacy because these skills are promoted well across the school. For example, in an outstanding cross-curricular lesson in Year 3, pupils discussed an engaging text about the rainforest, developing their creative speech and learning more about the five senses. In most lessons, pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening within groups and with their 'talk partners'. Pupils do less well in mathematics than in English because work is not always adapted closely enough to the wide range of needs in each class. For example, at the start of some numeracy lessons, all pupils complete the same tasks. At times, those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities struggle to keep up, and at other times the more able finish tasks too quickly and are kept waiting by others.

Pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory, although progress varies between classes. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher talked for too long, limiting the opportunity for pupils to practise calculating percentages for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, but in some lessons the work is too difficult and they are given too much support, limiting their independence.

Pupils' sound oracy, literacy and numeracy skills, along with their good personal development, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of education and later

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life. Rates of attendance are above average, reflecting pupils’ enthusiasm for school. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and are listened to when they have a worry. They have a good understanding about staying safe, including e-safety. Pupils are good at helping others and respond positively to the new code for behaviour. They raise funds for charities and develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The school’s ‘values education’ supports pupils well in reflecting sensitively on the lives of others. For example, in assembly, they showed empathy for those affected by the anniversary of the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. They are developing a greater awareness of cultural diversity through their links with other schools. The school deserves the National Healthy School Award because pupils are keen to take part in the various sporting activities on offer and most enjoy healthy snacks and lunches.

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and their enthusiasm is effective in engaging learners’ interest and managing behaviour successfully. They prepare lessons thoroughly and use a range of resources to support learning. For example, in a well-taught lesson in Year 2, various number lines were provided to help pupils sequence numbers correctly. Teachers involve pupils well in assessing their own learning with the ‘thumbs up’ system. In some lessons, especially in mathematics, teachers do not ensure that all pupils are challenged consistently well. For example, in one mathematics lesson all pupils completed work on the same multiplication table and this was too easy for the more able.

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

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The satisfactory curriculum is developing to include greater links between subjects. Literacy is used well to support learning in topic work and has increased the motivation of boys in writing. There are missed opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy at the right level in all subjects, particularly in science.

Members of staff know the pupils well and keep track of their progress effectively. This makes a strong contribution to pupils’ mostly good outcomes for personal development. There is particularly strong support for new pupils and those who have personal problems, enabling them to take a full part in what the school has to offer. Guidance on how to behave well has developed and supports pupils effectively. Well-coordinated systems contribute positively to the school’s above-average rates of attendance. The before- and after-school provision run by the school supports families well and provides healthy snacks and safe activities.

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?

Leaders embed ambition and drive improvement satisfactorily because there is a shared understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school so that it can become good in the future. They promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination satisfactorily and pupils from different backgrounds are supported and encouraged equally. All pupils are included well socially, and the school is working satisfactorily with external agencies to eliminate unevenness in learning and progress between classes and subjects. The changes in staffing have been managed smoothly.

The school’s safeguarding arrangements keep pupils safe, although paper records are not always kept fully up to date. Members of staff are suitably trained and safer recruitment procedures are followed carefully.

The governing body meets statutory requirements and is knowledgeable about the school. It is starting to have an impact on improving provision and pupils’ progress. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to be involved in the local community and is expanding opportunities for them to learn in greater depth about cultures beyond Europe.

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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	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 make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes and enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment. A wide range of activities are made available indoors and outside and children enjoy working with each other and members of staff. Children learn best when working with an adult. For example, children enjoyed making and counting pretend birthday cakes, learning how to use paint rollers and sharing a story about how to share and be polite. However, the support for activities that children choose for themselves does not always take sufficient account of children’s prior knowledge and skills. Consequently, some activities do not extend the children’s learning fully from one day to the next.

Children settle into school swiftly because members of staff work closely with parents and carers and establish good relationships with the children. Clear routines help children to become confident, happy and inquisitive. Children are keen to talk about what they are doing, enjoy learning and most behave sensibly. Sensitive support is provided for children’s social and emotional needs. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing learning, and members of staff have recently received additional training to increase their confidence and accuracy. Leaders have sound plans for improvement, including ensuring that there are more boy-friendly activities to help promote literacy.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	3

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are positive about the school and are particularly pleased with the teachers and the way their children are kept happy. The inspection team found teachers to be enthusiastic and, consequently, pupils are keen to come to school. A few parents and carers expressed concerns over the information provided on the progress that their children make and the way unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. The inspection team found that the school provides a satisfactory amount of information on pupils' progress and is happy to provide parents and carers with more on request. The school has recently reviewed the behaviour policy and no unacceptable behaviour was observed during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sonning Common 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 392 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	79	22	20	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	68	32	29	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	32	29	61	55	14	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	38	47	42	8	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	60	54	46	41	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	51	46	49	44	8	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	62	39	35	2	2	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)	55	50	47	42	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	48	43	47	42	10	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	40	45	41	14	13	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	34	55	50	5	5	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	53	48	53	48	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	73	66	36	32	1	1	1	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.

13 September 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Sonning Common Primary School, Reading RG4 9RJ

We enjoyed coming to see your friendly school. Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

These are the best things about your school.

- You make best progress in literacy.
- You behave well and enjoy coming to school.
- You are good at helping around the school and in the local area. We are pleased that you help to save energy by turning off lights when not in use.
- We agree with you when you say that teachers look after you well.
- The headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school better.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next to help it improve.

- Make sure that you are all given work that is just right for you in mathematics and that teachers tell you how to do better next time so that you can learn quickly.
- Give you more opportunities to practise and improve your numeracy skills in mathematics lessons and when you are working in other subjects.
- Make sure that leaders identify the most important things they need to do next to make the school better and show how what they have already done has helped you to learn better.
- Make sure that children in the Reception classes are helped to learn quickly when they are working on activities they have chosen for themselves.

Thank you once again for telling us about your school and letting us see your work. You could help your teachers by always doing your best work.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge
Lead inspector

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