

Southfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109580
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	368237
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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	404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Cliff Dunn
Headteacher	Marilyn Redfern
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching in 27 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Inspectors met with pupils, members of the governing body, leaders and staff. Inspectors also talked to several parents and carers informally as they brought their children to school. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at policy documents, tracking data, work in pupils' books, school improvement planning and records of behaviour and incidents. Inspectors considered the views of staff, pupils and 78 parents and carers through returned questionnaires.

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

- To what extent have standards in writing improved?
- How effectively do leaders at all levels drive school improvement across all key stages?
- How effectively does the school meet the needs of pupils who join speaking little or no English?

Information about the school

This large primary school was created in September 2009 when the adjoining infant and junior schools amalgamated. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average. The largest ethnic group is White British, followed by Bangladeshi and Pakistani. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils develop positive attitudes and make good progress in their work. The curriculum offers a wide range of activities and opportunities that pupils enjoy. From low starting points, pupils make good progress to reach standards of attainment that are in line with national averages. Progress in writing has improved throughout the school so that their attainment in this is catching up with that of reading.

The vast majority of teaching is good. Well-planned activities are closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils know exactly what they need to do in these lessons because teachers refer back to success criteria throughout the lesson. In these lessons, teachers effectively reinforce learning with good quality questioning and well-designed plenary sessions. Additional support is given to help pupils catch up or tackle concepts that they find difficult. Pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English are supported well so they are able to access the curriculum and learn English quickly. In a number of satisfactory lessons, activities motivate pupils less effectively. Work in these lessons is less focused on learning and more on completion of task. In too many of these lessons, teaching assistants are unclear about their role and, on a few occasions, give too much support so the challenge is removed for the pupils being supported. Marking throughout the school is comprehensive but not always effective. Target stickers are added to work to show pupils what they can do, but these do not always give the sharp guidance that would help individuals make their work better. In some classes, teachers' written remarks are useful and give clear guidance about how to improve work and correct mistakes. However, pupils are too infrequently given the opportunity to look at their work and make these changes and, as a consequence, this marking has a limited impact on helping pupils to improve their work further.

Leaders have demonstrated their capacity to improve through a period of significant change. Standards of attainment have risen and rates of attendance have improved. Leadership roles have been evaluated and the leadership team has been strengthened to provide consistency across all areas of the school's work. Consequently, leaders have a good understanding and level of expertise collectively to drive school improvement across the full age range. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the next steps in their development journey. Their self-evaluation is accurate and honest. However, their school improvement planning is not sufficiently informed by a robust analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils in the school and this limits their ability to

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ensure that any inequalities within year groups are tackled quickly.

The school is exceptionally good at engaging with most groups of parents and carers. Learning mentors and family support workers provide an outstanding service in reaching out to families, including those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. However, communications over the past year have fallen short of the school's high expectations. Systems for communication with parents and carers have recently been strengthened in response, but this has not yet had a clear impact on parental perceptions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality and consistency of teaching so that the vast majority of lessons are good or better, by ensuring that:
 - teaching assistants are always well briefed about their role in class
 - marking is always used to help pupils improve their work
 - all lessons are carefully planned to engage the full range of learners in exciting activities at an appropriate level.
- Ensure leaders use timely information about the performance of different groups, including boys, girls and different ethnic groups, when planning school improvement to so that teaching and school activities can be accurately evaluated in relation to providing equality of opportunity.
- Take steps to ensure all parents and carers have faith in the school's ability to communicate in a timely manner and work in partnership with them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From starting points that are well below the levels expected for their age, pupils were seen to be making typically good progress in lessons and the attainment of the older pupils was broadly average. Pupils are very positive about the experiences they have at school. They enjoy the rich curriculum that includes interesting topics and a range of visits and visitors that bring learning alive. Pupils work independently and in groups with confidence. In most classes, pupils know that expectations are high and they work hard to meet them. They think deeply about the questions they are asked and demonstrate thoughtfulness when talking about issues and dilemmas. Work in pupils' books shows that they are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good quality support found in the large majority of lessons and in focused small group work outside the classroom.

Pupils say that they feel safe and like coming to school. They know where to go when they have a problem and feel confident that they will be listened to and cared for. Behaviour around school and in the playground is good. A calm and purposeful atmosphere is positively promoted and this contributes well to the successful learning

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environment. A very small number of pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour in class and around school. Inspectors found that this behaviour is managed well by the school so that these pupils continue to be included in learning without adversely affecting their peers.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. They talk convincingly about the effects that factors such as diet and exercise have on their health. A large number of pupils take part in active extra-curricular clubs which promote fitness and health. Pupils contribute well to their school. The school council is active and ensures that all pupils are involved in decision-making. Attendance is above average and pupils understand the importance of arriving punctually and ready for school. This, along with good progress in developing their basic skills and their ability to make decisions fairly, contribute to the strong development of skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

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	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	2
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 high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond well to these expectations because teachers are generally very clear about what pupils need to do to be successful. Topics are planned to be interesting to the broad range of pupils. Basic skills, such as the sounds that different letter combinations make, are taught in a systematic way so that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress in reading and writing. Sharp, well-focused additional sessions are effectively led by teaching assistants and these help pupils catch up and understand difficult concepts.

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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Effective opportunities for more-able pupils are found in lessons and through extra activities in, for example, sport, performing arts and science.

The school provides particularly well for pupils and families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, and good use of specialised support has had a strong influence on the improvements seen in attendance, achievement and enjoyment. Parents and carers are encouraged to take part in a range of activities that help them support their child’s learning and development. The popular ‘stay and play’ sessions for babies and toddlers promote good transition into the nursery, with parents and carers already forming strong links with the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have been tenacious in their drive for improvement. Many significant changes have taken place as a result of the school becoming a primary school, and a significant number of barriers have had to be overcome. Throughout this, leaders have remained focused on raising standards across a range of outcomes and have been successful in doing so. Leaders have established a clear framework for improvement which is based on high-quality teaching and ensuring every child is valued and supported. Staff work well together and share this common goal. School improvement has been rapid and all encompassing. However, leaders have found themselves, at times, over-stretched and have not made sufficient use of the information available about different groups within the school. As a result their actions have not always been sufficiently well focused, and this has limited their capacity to manage unexpected events. This is a significant reason why communication has been less effective with some groups of parents and carers.

The headteacher has recognised the need to broaden the leadership team and key appointments have been made both in terms of school leaders and members of the governing body. These are proving effective with leadership responsibilities being shared more equally. The governing body is in a good position to provide strong challenge and support as a result of the expertise of its members and their increasing numbers. Their monitoring of the school’s work and their governance in recent times have been satisfactory. They meet all statutory duties and challenge school performance appropriately.

Despite some relative weaknesses in communication, the school’s relationship with

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many parents and carers is very strong indeed. This partnership is significant in improving outcomes for groups of pupils.

Safeguarding procedures are effective and systems for maintaining pupils’ safety are secure and rigorously applied. The school is a very cohesive community with pupils from different backgrounds getting on noticeably well together. Different cultures are celebrated positively and any racist incidents are dealt with appropriately. However, the school is yet to implement plans to support pupils in developing their understanding of the cultural diversity and heritage beyond their immediate locality.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

A wide range of activities and opportunities excite and motivate children so they engage well together. Adults are skilled at working with groups on their chosen activities, with a good focus on developing language and social skills so that these particular areas in children’s early skills are developed well. Children make rapid progress in understanding the sounds that letters make because this is taught in an effective and fun way. The outdoor area is particularly impressive with children enjoying a range of experiences that support their development. In one activity, a group of children enthusiastically tended to their garden. In this activity, adults ably supported children’s language development by talking to them about what they were doing, adding interesting and useful vocabulary and encouraging positive interaction. This type of intervention is typical and supports pupils well in their language and social development.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. Leaders have a good understanding of the current strengths of the provision and have clear plans for the future. As a result

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the provision continues to improve.

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

Most parents and carers who returned the questionnaire state that they are happy with their child’s experiences at the school. Most say that their children enjoy school and make good progress. A small number expressed concern at the effectiveness of the school’s communication with them. For some, this was directly linked to reports being sent home very late last term with no opportunity to discuss them with the school before the summer holiday. The school’s leaders acknowledge that communication has not always been as effective or timely as they strive for it to be. Inspectors found that they have taken actions to improve communications, but some of these improvements are very recent and parents and carers are yet to fully trust the new systems. A few expressed concerns over behaviour management. Inspectors found that a very small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour, but this is managed effectively by the school. Most pupils behave very well and this is also supported by the school’s strategies for promoting positive behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southfield 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 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 404 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	62	27	35	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	68	22	28	2	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	36	46	33	42	5	6	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	42	37	47	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	46	59	27	35	3	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	32	41	39	50	6	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	42	42	54	2	3	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)	32	41	39	50	6	8	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	35	45	33	42	5	6	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	38	39	50	4	5	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	28	45	58	5	6	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	37	47	33	42	4	5	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	40	51	31	40	5	6	2	3

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 8 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.



23 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southfield Primary School, Luton, LU4 0PE

You may remember that we came to inspect your school recently. This letter is to let you know what we found out. We found that you go to a good school. You do well in your lessons because you work hard and many of your teachers are good at giving you exciting things to do and clear guidance in class about what you need to do to be successful. Almost all of you behave very well, and the few pupils who do not are managed well by your teachers.

We have asked your school to work on a couple of things to make it even better. We have asked your teachers to make sure all lessons are good. Many are already really exciting, and in these lessons you do really well. However, in others it is not as easy for you to do well because the teaching is not as exciting and the activities are not as well thought out. Perhaps you could talk to your school councillors about what makes learning easier for you in lessons so they can feed this back to your headteacher. We found that your teachers spend a lot of time marking books but this does not always help you as much as it could because you do not always get the chance to improve your work. We have asked your teachers to make sure their comments help you to make your work get better and to give you the chance to make these improvements. Make sure you think about the comments made and how you will make your work better as a result of your teachers' advice.

I have also asked your headteacher and other leaders to improve a couple of things to help them do their jobs a little more effectively. You should find that they are communicating with your parents and carers better so that information gets home more quickly. You may not notice, but they should also be checking regularly that pupils in different groups perform as well as each other. This means that they will be checking the performance of different groups such as boys, girls, pupils who speak different languages at home, and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. This is so they can make sure no group is falling behind in their learning.

I would like to finish by thanking all of you who spoke with us. We all found you to be polite, honest and well mannered. You have my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely
Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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