

St Monica Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number116106Local AuthoritySouthamptonInspection number379203Inspection dates4–5 October 2011Reporting inspectorGehane Gordelier HMIThis inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school School category Age range of pupils Gender of pupils Nu mber of pupils on the school roll Appropriate authority Chair Headteacher Date of previous school inspection School address

Infant Community 4–7 Mixed 261 The governing body Brian Eley Kathryn Bevan-Mackie 11-12 June 2009 Bay Road Sholing Southampton SO19 8EZ 023 8039 9870 023 8049 9010 info@st-monica-inf.southampton.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons and nine teachers. They also observed an assembly as well as the pupils at play and during lunch time. The inspectors spoke to pupils and held meetings with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner. They looked at pupils' work and scrutinised a range of school documentation. This included data about the progress being made by pupils; teachers' planning; action and improvement plans; evaluation documents; minutes from meetings held by the governing body and records of visits from the local authority. The inspectors also looked carefully at a range of school policies and practice, especially those pertaining to keeping children safe. They took account of the responses to questionnaires returned by 103 parents and carers and 14 members of staff.

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

- Are pupils, particularly boys, making sufficient progress in writing?
- Is teaching providing sufficient challenge for all groups of learners, and taking enough account of pupils' prior learning, aptitudes and skills?
- How effectively are leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, contributing to accelerating the pace of change leading to higher levels of pupil achievement?

Information about the school

St Monica is larger than the average infant school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. A small minority of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and fewer than average have a statement of special educational needs. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception Year.

The new headteacher has been in post since April 2011. The Chair of the Governing Body has been in post for a year. Following the resignation of the former substantive headteacher, an executive headteacher, who had previously been working with the school, served as acting headteacher for two terms in the last academic year. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark for primary schools. The on-site pre-school is run by a separate provider and was therefore not part of this inspection.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Main findings

St Monica Infants is a satisfactory and improving school. Parents, carers and staff welcome the positive changes introduced by the new headteacher. These have led, for example, to improved levels of communication within the school as well as between the school and parents and carers. Consequently, parents and carers have become much more engaged with school events as well as with their children's learning. This has resulted, for example, in good progress and higher levels of attainment in reading. A view expressed by one parent reflects the views of others, 'The school involves not only the children they teach but the family as well as the community.'

Children develop an interest for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The good transition arrangements with the pre-schools, as well as with parents and carers, enable children to settle quickly and happily into school life. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at school given their starting points. They attain levels that are a little above those reached by most pupils nationally by the end of Year 2. However, they do not all achieve their full potential, particularly in writing and mathematics. This is because the rate of progress they make is not consistently good. Staff are committed and hard-working, but do not always make sufficient use of data and information about pupils to ensure they provide consistently good levels of challenge or plan for the good progression of skills. Although there are class targets, pupils do not have individual targets. At times, pupils are overly focused on their activities at the expense of their learning. In addition, not all pupils, particularly the more-able, achieve as well as they could. The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. This results in them making satisfactory progress overall. Although some pupils receive good and well-targeted, additional support, this is not the case for all pupils. Where support is less effective, it is because there is insufficient guidance for teaching assistants about how they can best meet the additional needs of pupils.

The curriculum has improved and has become more engaging and linked to real-life experiences or stories. This has helped pupils to become more motivated about their learning, including boys with their writing. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length, or to utilise and further develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum. There is also limited use by teachers and pupils of new technologies to support and enhance teaching and learning. Pupils are kind and considerate; they are polite to each other and to adults. They are confident that the adults in the school will help them if they have a problem. This contributes

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to the extent to which they feel safe and to their understanding of how to keep themselves safe in school as well as on school outings. Pupils take part in a good range of sporting and healthy activities and make healthy choices given their age.

Under the good leadership of the new headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body, the school has developed an accurate view of its strengths and areas in need of improvement. The school's self-evaluation and Raising Attainment Plan reflect this and contribute to the communication of a clear sense of direction and purpose. However, the roles of some senior and middle leaders, as well as some members of the governing body, are underdeveloped. Consequently, they are not contributing as well as they might to helping to drive and embed school improvement. Senior leaders are making better use of data to track the progress made by pupils, but middle leaders have yet to make sufficient use of this information to inform planning. Consequently, improvement plans, as well as monitoring and evaluation activities, are not always sharply focused on the outcomes for pupils. Furthermore, managers and teachers are not held to account rigorously enough for the progress made by different groups of pupils. The governing body has developed a new single equalities plan; former plans have not always been monitored or reviewed rigorously or the findings communicated to parents and carers. Although the school has improved since its last inspection, progress has been slow. This, together with aspects of leadership and management across the school which are underdeveloped, limit the school's capacity to improve to being no better than satisfactory.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' achievement so that they make more consistently good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring teachers make consistently good use of data and assessment information when planning their lessons
 - setting targets for every class and holding teachers more closely to account for the progress made by different groups of pupils
 - providing pupils with personal targets, so they know what to aim for
 - providing pupils with consistently good feedback in lessons and in their workbooks so they know what they are doing well and how they can further improve
 - increasing opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to write, particularly at length, and to utilise and develop further their mathematical skills.
- Ensure teaching and learning are consistently good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve especially those of average and above average ability

- ensuring teachers plan in greater detail for the progression of skills for pupils of different ability
- ensuring that additional adults are well informed about how best they can meet the needs of pupils
- ensuring that pupils are equally well focused on their learning as they are on their activities
- increasing the use of new technologies to help accelerate the pace of teaching and learning
- embedding the use of assessment strategies during and after lessons.
- Develop the role of leaders, managers and members of the governing body so that they have a greater impact on driving and embedding improvements by:
 - ensuring that improvement plans as well as monitoring and evaluation activities are sharply focused on outcomes for pupils
 - managers taking a leading role in their areas of responsibility and being held more closely to account for the impact of their work in raising levels of attainment
 - increasing the number of governors who are actively involved in holding the school to account
 - ensuring there is greater rigour in the reviewing of policies and plans related to equality of opportunity and communicating findings to parents and carers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is evident in their good behaviour in lessons and around the school. On the rare occasions where behaviour is less than good it is because teaching fails to engage their interest or they have been expected to sit passively for too long. There is a rising trend in levels of attainment, albeit slow and at times uneven. In 2010, pupils attained levels that were significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The rate at which pupils learn, and progress, although good in a few classes is satisfactory overall. This leads to their satisfactory achievement in writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. However, levels of achievement are better in reading. This is due to the concerted effort by staff and pupils in this area, as well as the good support parents and carers provide their children with in reading. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Girls and boys in Key Stage 1 generally make the same amount of progress. Despite an improving picture, White British boys still attain less well than their peers with their writing. From an early age, pupils learn a range of literacy, numeracy and other basic skills satisfactorily. However, when writing, they do not always use their learning of letters and the sounds they make to write new and unfamiliar words. There are also limited opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum or for them to use and apply their mathematical skills in different contexts. Although teaching and support staff help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to meet the learning intentions of lessons, the additional needs of this group of pupils are not always taken sufficiently into account

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to help maximise their learning.

At times, there are too few opportunities for pupils to solve problems and develop as independent learners, including making decisions about what they will need to support them with their learning. Although children enjoy using information and communication technology, there is not enough use of computers or the 'smart board' to support and extend pupils' learning. Pupils make a positive contribution to their school and the local community. The school council, in particular, contributed to changes in the arrangements about the end of the school day; it helped to plan the summer fair and to choose the school sign. However, pupils' contribution to the wider community is limited. The basic levels of skills that pupils develop, as well as their good social skills and average levels of attendance, help them to be suitably prepared for the next phase of their education and future. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of moral values. However, their knowledge and appreciation of other cultures and faiths are less well developed. Moments of reflection and prayer in assemblies help pupils to think about others and to give thanks for what they have.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3	
Taking into account:	2	
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		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being		
Taking into account:		
Pupils' attendance ¹	3	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		

How effective is the provision?

Relationships between adults and children are good. Classroom displays are interactive, informative and used to celebrate pupils' achievements. Teachers typically share the learning objectives with pupils and encourage the use of talk and response partners. There are well-established routines and this helps pupils to know what is expected of them. Although there are pockets of good practice, a small

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

minority of inadequate lessons were observed. In the best teaching seen, such as in a lesson about shape in Year 2, teaching built effectively on pupils' previous knowledge and skills. Pupils were provided with well-planned practical activities and sufficient time allowed for them to put new learning into practice. The pupils in this lesson worked well together, sharing ideas and discussing the properties of different shapes. Where teaching was less effective, teachers spent too much time talking while pupils sat patiently and passively. However, by the time pupils were expected to get on with their work, they struggled to remember all that was expected of them. Teaching in these lessons did not routinely check pupils' understanding and progress and this resulted at times in too little challenge, particularly for pupils of average and above average ability. The quality of planning is not sufficiently good to ensure that all lessons are well structured and promote consistently good levels of progression. Pupils say they would welcome more feedback about how well they are doing and how they can improve.

The use of visits and visitors to the school enhances the curriculum. There is a particularly good programme to support the personal, social and health education of pupils. There are increasing links between subjects. This is all helping to put learning into a more meaningful and purposeful context. However, curriculum planning does not always promote sufficient progression of skills. Planned opportunities for spiritual development are also scant. The level of pastoral care provided to pupils and the support that parents and carers receive from the school are good. All staff, including those who work in the office and help at lunch times, ensure that pupils are safe, happy and well cared for. There is particularly effective support for those pupils whose circumstances make them most likely to be vulnerable. There are good transition arrangements for entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage and for when pupils leave for their junior school. However, the quality of guidance and support does not contribute equally well to pupils' learning and academic achievements.

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	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

These are the grades for the quality of provision

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership. Senior leaders and governors are appropriately focused on raising levels of attainment. The new leadership arrangements have led to staff becoming more motivated. Although senior leaders and the governing body have a clear vision for the school, middle managers and teachers have yet to fully reflect their understanding of this in their daily practice.

Consequently, the rate at which leaders and managers are able to drive and embed improvement is currently no better than satisfactory. Senior leaders have set challenging targets in the Raising Attainment Plan, but the action and improvement plans of other leaders and managers do not communicate well enough the high expectations for all year groups and for pupils of different ability.

Partnerships with other local schools are supporting the work of the governing body and senior leaders, for example in improving levels of attendance. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is satisfactory. This has led to girls making better progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and a reduction in the gap of levels of attainment between boys and girls in writing. However, there is not enough rigour in the monitoring of the performance of all pertinent groups. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is good. All relevant policies are in place and staff and governors have received appropriate training. Good communication and relationships with other agencies ensure that support is provided to meet the individual needs of potentially vulnerable pupils as they arise. The school's good understanding of the community it serves is reflected in its community cohesion plan. Staff are proactive in forging links with the local community. They recognise, however, the need to develop the plan further by including a wider global dimension, and for this to be reflected in curriculum provision.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
Taking into account:	2	
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		
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures		
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money		

These are the grades for leadership and management

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a bright and stimulating learning environment. This encourages children to try new experiences, such as role playing as a sales person in a shoe shop or preparing food in the kitchen. Children are

articulate and well behaved and when provided with opportunities, they are able to make choices. They work and play well together and respond positively to questions. Adults help children to enrich their vocabulary by modelling new and unfamiliar words and by encouraging children to use key words. Children's learning is put into context and this helps them to recognise the value of what they are doing. A good example was seen in the work children were doing following a walk around the local area. Adults helped the children to identify different shapes and to use words such as 'bigger' and 'smaller' when they later sorted shapes in the classroom. Discussions about different types of housing encouraged children to recognise the difference between detached and semi-detached houses. This linked well to developing their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Assessment information is not always taken sufficiently into account in the planning of subsequent lessons. Furthermore, the early learning goals are not sufficiently referenced within planning. This limits the extent to which skills are progressed, particularly for those children who are the most able. There are few opportunities, for example, for children to identify for themselves the resources they wish to use over and above those that have already been laid out for them. Although one of the areas in which pupils attain particularly well is in the use of numbers as labels and for counting, this is also an area in which children make the least amount of progress. Children make particularly good progress in their linking of sounds and letters. However, they do not attain as well in this aspect of their learning as they do in writing. There is a large covered outside area, but this is not always used as well as it could be to extend further children's learning.

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		
Taking into account:	2	
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		

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Views of parents and carers

There was a higher than average rate of response by parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire. Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire believe that their children enjoy school, that the school keeps their children safe and that the school is led and managed effectively. They are also happy with their children's experience. A very few parents and carers do not believe that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour; they also do not agree that their children are making enough progress. The inspection found that behaviour in the school is good and this is partly due to the effectiveness with which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour as well as to the pupils' good personal and social

development. However, inspectors found that not all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable; this has been included as an area for the school to improve.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Monica Infant 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 261 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Stro agı		Ag	ree	Disa	gree	Stro disa	ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	71	28	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	74	26	25	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	58	56	41	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	52	38	37	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	57	36	35	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	60	36	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	62	37	36	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)	64	62	32	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	59	36	35	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	46	43	42	5	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	56	38	37	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	74	72	28	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	79	20	19	1	1	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary	14	36	41	9
schools				
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral	14	50	31	5
units				
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:	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.		
	 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.

6 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Monica Infant School, Southampton, SO19 8EZ

Thank you for making us welcome and for spending time speaking to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. As you know, we spent time in some of your lessons; we looked at the work of the school and talked to you about your learning. We spoke to the teachers, and were very interested in what your parents and carers told us about the school. I am writing to thank you for helping us with our work and to share some of our findings with you. The school has been judged as satisfactory. These are some of the good things about your school.

- We are impressed by your good behaviour and how polite you are.
- You know a lot for your age about how to be healthy.
- You feel safe in school and trust the adults to help you if you have a problem.
- The school does a good job of keeping you safe.
- The school works very well with parents and carers. This has helped you to make better progress with your learning, especially your reading.

These are some of the things we have asked your school to do to help it to become even better.

- We think you can do even better in your writing and your maths and have asked the school to make sure that the progress you make is always good.
- We would like all of your lessons to be as good as the best lessons in your school.
- Although we agree that your new headteacher is doing a good job, we would like all of the adults who are responsible for leading and managing, including some of the governors, to get even better at helping the school to improve.

You can help your school by continuing to work hard in lessons and by making sure that you come to school when you are supposed to. I wish you every success and happiness for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier Her Majesty's Inspector



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