

# South Benfleet Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	137029
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	385566
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 December 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Worgan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	403
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Canon Eileen French
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dominic Carver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	High Road South Benfleet Benfleet SS7 5HA
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were observed involving 14 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, teachers' planning, governors' minutes and pupils' work. Inspectors received 103 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- How accurate are leaders and managers in their monitoring of teaching and learning?
- How effectively has the school dealt with the apparent decline in attainment and progress in 2011?
- How effective has the school been in reducing the gaps between boys' and girls' attainment.
- How effective is the school's support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities?

## Information about the school

South Benfleet Primary School is larger than average. The percentage of pupils who are receiving additional support to help them with their learning is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who have a statement identifying their special educational needs. There are very few pupils who come from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Recently, new Early Years Foundation Stage class base and play area has been built and the purchase and development of extra land at the back of the school has increased the amount of space available for play and sport.

The school converted to academy status on 1 August 2011 and is developing a partnership with another local primary school. The on-site pre-school is privately managed and was inspected separately.

**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

South Benfleet is a good school. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by staff and governors and which is leading to improvement. Pupils are well cared for, and staff work hard to ensure that they are happy and secure, so that they can achieve well. Parents, carers and pupils comment favourably on the support which they receive; as one parent said, 'You can see how happy the children are going to and coming out of school.'

Children's skills are in line with those expected for their age when they start school. Their needs are identified quickly and they are encouraged to develop confidence so that they achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average, although some more-able boys do not reach their full potential in writing.

The quality of teaching is good. There is some outstanding practice, especially in Key Stage 2. A strong feature of the school is the way in which teachers plan together, resulting in interesting and stimulating lessons; as one pupil said, 'Lessons here are fun.' A high priority is given to the development of literacy and numeracy skills and a focus on writing in the last two years has had a significant effect on pupils' progress. In some lessons, however, pupils are not challenged to use their full abilities.

Behaviour is good, and pupils are polite and respectful to adults and to each other. Attendance, above average in the past, has declined recently and is now average. The school is aware of this and is taking positive action to reverse this trend by discouraging parents and carers from taking holidays in term time. The pupils, and their parents and carers, say that the school keeps them safe and there is little bullying. Pupils are well prepared for the future through the development of their literacy and numeracy skills and through good transition arrangements, which begin in Year 5, with the main secondary schools to which they move on.

Teachers track pupils' progress thoroughly and carefully. Regular assessment ensures that progress is monitored and any pupils slipping behind are quickly identified and supported. Marking in English is thorough, identifying steps which pupils should take in order to improve. In other subject areas marking is less rigorous, concentrating on correction and congratulation. Middle managers and senior staff work with class teachers in using data to plan for the needs of individuals and groups. The planning of the curriculum and grouping strategies is flexible and is adapted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. However, this process has

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been not been rigorous enough in meeting the needs of the more able, and the school recognises this as a priority for future development.

Leadership and management are good. A strong and experienced senior team is supported by an enthusiastic group of middle managers, and leadership skills are developed through a clear line-management structure. Staff are highly committed and work well together; a particular strength is the way in which staffing changes have been managed, minimising the effect on pupils' progress. Governance is good; the governing body is very supportive of the school, and has a strong core of experienced governors who have a wide range of skills. Self-evaluation is accurate, and the headteacher and senior staff have produced a school development plan which is clear and succinct, enabling staff and governors to focus on key areas for improvement. The school is well respected in the local community but has yet to develop the national and international links which would extend pupils' experiences. A particular strength of the school is its involvement in two partnerships; one with another primary school which became an academy at the same time and a second as a leading school in initial teacher training. These links have had significant impact on staff development, on curriculum and on planning and, consequently, have improved teaching and learning. The strong leadership of the school and the robust systems for planning and self-evaluation mean that the school has good capacity for improvement.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Challenge all pupils, and especially the most-able boys, by providing tasks which encourage them to work independently and to develop their abilities to the full.
- Improve assessment by spreading the good and outstanding practice of some teachers, especially in English, which helps pupils to be aware of the next steps which they need to take in order to improve their work.

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

**2**

Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 6, achieving standards above those expected for their age. Progress data for the current Year 6 are robust and indicate that the long-term trend of above-average attainment has been resumed after a dip in results last year. Writing has been a key focus over the last two years and this is reflected in the good progress of most Year 6 pupils in this area. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points due to well-targeted and appropriate support.

Pupils in Year 4 exemplified the positive attitudes and strong speaking and listening skills that contribute to pupils' good progress, as they demonstrated number sequences which they had investigated, using a visualiser to show and explain them to the whole class. In the best lessons, adults' careful questioning deepens understanding, fostering learning skills, and more-able pupils are encouraged to

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learn independently. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not always reliant on additional support because they have regular opportunities to work independently or collaboratively without direction from an adult.

Pupils have an excellent perspective on what constitutes unsafe situations and say they feel safe at school. Their behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. Although a few pupils require additional guidance from adults to keep on track, they respond quickly to this. Participation in local events and fundraising activities broaden pupils' sense of community beyond the school. Pupils mix and work well together, both in and out of the classroom. Respectful of others' needs, pupils are reflective about the world around them. They have a good understanding of factors affecting their health and respond well to the school's health promotion strategies. The school has a heated pool and all pupils have the opportunity to swim for ten weeks each summer. Pupils' successful application of their basic skills, well-developed wider key skills, such as the ability to work with others, and good personal qualities prepare them well for the next stage of their education and life beyond. Assemblies are stimulating and give pupils opportunities for reflection, and the religious education syllabus broadens pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

**How effective is the provision?**

In the best lessons, pupils' interest and enthusiasm are stimulated by a variety of activities and pupils are actively engaged in learning. For example, in a science lesson in Year 6, pupils' imagination was fired by an activity in which they were

<sup>1</sup> 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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asked to separate the components of a ‘witches brew’. They enjoyed using different techniques such as filtration to separate the components and, in the process, they not only learned scientific concepts and techniques but also demonstrated impressive teamwork. Pupils say they enjoy the ‘Big Writing’ sessions which develop extended writing, and the impact of this is seen in writing across the curriculum. Teachers use questioning well and encourage pupils to devise their own solutions to problems, rather than providing answers for them. Occasionally, more-able pupils complete tasks quickly and are not challenged to extend their learning. In weaker lessons, the pace is slower and a few pupils become distracted. In these lessons, pupils’ learning is more passive with fewer opportunities for independent learning and a limited range of activities.

Teachers regularly set and review targets in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are aware of their targets and are appreciative of teachers’ help in encouraging them to achieve them. This is particularly strong in literacy, where pupils ‘Big Writing’ books show clear progression because marking guides them towards specific areas for improvement. In a literacy lesson in Year 4, pupils were assessing their work in pairs against success criteria and this contributed to a level of progress well above that expected for their age. In some subject areas and in some classes, however, assessment is less well developed and is limited to comments and corrections.

The curriculum is well planned with a strong emphasis on developing basic skills. This is enhanced by a topic-based creative curriculum which integrates history, geography, art, information and communication technology, and design and technology. Themes are mapped carefully to ensure coverage and progression, and pupils clearly enjoy and appreciate the activities offered. As pupils commented, ‘Maths is really fun; we are improving and getting faster and we enjoy working together in groups.’ Impressive displays demonstrate the breadth of the curriculum, including examples of Chinese art, Viking Runic writing, Greek masks, mythical creatures and annotated diagrams of volcanoes. In an information and communication technology lesson, pupils were composing newsletters inspired by a visit to the Natural History Museum and were importing photographs of ‘dinosaur bones’ which they had excavated. As one pupil commented, ‘Subjects are all connected.’

Effective systems underpin the positive and caring ethos of the school and pupils speak warmly about adults and the support which they receive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. Pupils in Year 6 are particularly complimentary about the preparation which they receive for the transition to secondary school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2

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<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school is ably led by the headteacher and his deputy who have high expectations, which are shared by the senior team and the staff as a whole. The areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been tackled effectively. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and there is now a wide range of resources for all pupils, including excellent facilities for information and communication technology. There is effective distribution of responsibility to leaders at different levels. Although some middle leaders are new to their position they are enthusiastic and work within a framework which encourages cooperation, while ensuring that high standards are maintained. Recent staff changes have been managed well, and robust systems ensure that managers new to their post are well supported. Monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous, yet supportive. School self-evaluation is strong and the governing body is involved at strategic and day-to-day levels. Several members of the governing body have been in post for several years and use their skills and experience to support the school in practical ways. The governing body has made the improvement of the school environment a priority and, although the building is old, it is bright, welcoming and well maintained.

The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind, and incidents of racist behaviour are extremely rare. Although there are few pupils from other cultures within the school, cultural diversity is recognised and celebrated through the curriculum. There are no significant groups who underachieve within the school, although the performance of higher-ability boys in writing does not yet match that of girls. Managers analyse progress of individuals and groups rigorously and action is taken to address areas of weakness when they are identified.

Staff understand well the school's clear and effective policies to safeguard and protect pupils. There are well-established and thorough systems to protect pupils, and staff regularly receive good-quality training in safeguarding, relevant to their role. Although pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of safety issues, some aspects of the child protection policy and record keeping do not yet reflect best practice. Relationships with parents and carers are highly positive and the school is a strongly cohesive community. Parents and carers are consulted through a variety of channels, including questionnaires, a parents' forum and parents' evenings.

The partnership with another local primary school is particularly strong, with regular visits by staff, joint training, moderation of pupils' work, mutual support at senior management level and interchange of staff. Although local links are strong, the school has yet to establish links with other communities in the United Kingdom or internationally.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The children make good progress as a result of good induction systems, strong links with parents and carers and a focus on addressing the gaps in children’s communication, language and literacy skills. Consequently, children develop good speaking and reading skills by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children demonstrate excellent team-working skills; for example, during the inspection a group of children cooperated in mixing ‘cement’ then built walls and painted the finished construction.

Provision is good. The new unit is bright, welcoming and well equipped with easy access to an outdoor area. Children make a good start to their education. They are well supported by adults in their work and play activities, which are well planned, organised and resourced with a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Teaching is good, responding to children’s needs and interests and encouraging independent learning. Regular mark-making activities, such as writing a Christmas list, stimulate and improve children’s writing skills. Systematic assessments inform planning which supports children’s continuous progress. Teaching assistants provide useful support both inside and in outdoor areas, by talking to the children and making observations and taking notes about their development and points for next steps in learning. The children have a stimulating environment and they follow a curriculum which is tailored to their needs. Children are well settled, safe and secure, and they show positive enjoyment in learning and attending school.

The staff have high aspirations for the children, whatever their ability or background, that are reflected in children’s good progress, both social and academic. Well-

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established systems and routines including robust assessment have minimised the effect of recent staffing changes, as have links with early years staff at the partner school.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Just over 25% of parents and carers returned questionnaires, which is average for this type of school. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive and several parents and carers commented on the high standard of care which their children receive. The parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school and the vast majority feel that the school keeps their children safe and that teaching is good. Very few parents and carers expressed concerns. A very small minority said that the school does not inform them sufficiently well about their children’s progress. However, inspectors were generally impressed by the efforts which the school makes to communicate with parents and carers.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Benfleet Foundation 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 403 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	58	41	40	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	59	41	40	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	26	65	63	11	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	36	59	57	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	39	60	58	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	37	36	59	57	6	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	47	48	47	4	4	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)	39	38	48	47	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	36	58	56	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	34	54	52	7	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	30	54	52	6	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	42	55	53	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	49	48	47	46	2	2	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	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



7 December 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of South Benfleet Foundation Primary School, Benfleet, SS7 5HA**

Thank you for the warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and took careful note of the positive comments which you and your parents and carers made about the school. We were very impressed by the way in which you enjoy learning and by the progress which you are making. We liked the ways in which you respect and care for one another and the ways in which you help each other to learn and to succeed.

Your school is good because:

- the headteacher and the staff care about you and help all of you to make good progress
- teachers plan interesting lessons and give you enjoyable and exciting things to do
- teachers work with other schools to help improve teaching and to ensure that you feel confident about moving to the next stage of your education
- your school is a pleasant and safe and happy place.

To help your school to be even better, we have asked the headteacher and his staff to:

- challenge all of you, and especially those of you who find some of your work easy, by giving you interesting and challenging work which will help you to reach higher standards
- help you by marking and assessing your work so that you know the steps which you need to take to reach higher levels.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Worgan  
Lead inspector

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