

Sylvan First School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113692
Local authority	Borough of Poole
Inspection number	378744
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Phillip Minns

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Price
Headteacher	Sarah Lee
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
School address	Livingstone Road Parkstone Poole BH12 3DT
Telephone number	01202 743064
Fax number	01202 716360
Email address	office@sylvan.poole.sch.uk

Age group	4–8
Inspection date(s)	22–23 February 2012
Inspection number	378744



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Phillip Minns

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

Allan Barfoot

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 21 parts of lessons delivered by 14 teachers, and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents relating to the school's self-evaluation, school improvement planning, evaluation of pupils' progress, planning, pupils' work and arrangements for safeguarding children. In addition, they examined questionnaires completed by 119 parents and carers, as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Sylvan First School is larger than most other first and primary schools. It provides for pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 3. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in five Reception classes. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. Few of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above that found in most schools. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is higher than average. The needs of these pupils relate mainly to speech, language and communication difficulty. For each of the past two years, a third of the teaching staff has changed as a result of an increase in pupil numbers. Since the last inspection the school has undergone a refurbishment as part of a local authority reorganisation of school places.

The school has been awarded the Sustainable School Award, the International Schools Award (Foundation level), the Schools Environmental Award and the Healthy Schools Award.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The school promotes good achievement for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory achievement for pupils in Years 1 to 3. It is not yet a good school because pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school. The setting of targets to support pupils' learning and their use in lessons is inconsistent and governors and senior leaders are not challenging the school sufficiently well to raise expectations.
- While the children enter school attaining below what is expected for their age, they quickly catch up and leave the Reception classes broadly in line with age-related expectations. In Years 1 to 3, pupils make satisfactory progress and their attainment is broadly in line with the national average. However, fewer pupils achieve the higher levels than those nationally. Progress in writing is not as strong as that in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. In the good lessons seen teachers make good use of assessment to match activities and questions to the range of abilities. This is not the case in all lessons. Pupils experience a creative and engaging curriculum that promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Behaviour is good due to teachers' consistent application of the school's behaviour management policy. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and this is confirmed by parents and carers. Attendance is in line with the national average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leaders and governing body have created a positive ethos for learning. However, they are not setting ambitious enough whole-school targets to raise pupils' attainment over time. Senior leaders have rightly identified the need to develop the skills of year and subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress to improve teaching and learning and to strengthen the school's capacity for further improvement.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise expectations for pupil achievement by setting more ambitious targets that will accelerate progress in Years 1 to 3 and raise attainment significantly above the national average.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that more lessons are good by:
 - ensuring teachers use targets and assessment information to match lessons more closely to the range of pupils' abilities, particularly for more able pupils
 - make sure pupils know how to improve their work so they are more successful in making better progress.
- Further develop the skills of subject and year leaders to monitor and evaluate progress toward challenging whole-school targets so that they can directly impact on outcomes for pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy their lessons and make satisfactory progress from Year 1 to the time they leave the school at the end of Year 3. By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment in national assessments is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. There is no significant variation in the progress of different groups of pupils, although fewer more able pupils than average reach the higher levels. Pupils in Year 3 also make satisfactory progress and achieve in line with national expectations. Due to effective interventions, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress across the school. Progress in reading and mathematics is stronger than in writing. Pupils say they particularly enjoy activities involving investigating, as in science experiments and being 'word detectives'. They apply their literacy and numeracy skills in topic work appropriately. By the end of Year 2 and Year 3 pupils reach national expectations for reading. They draw on a range of reading strategies, including phonics.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a bright and stimulating learning environment that captures children's interests and helps children to make good progress from their starting points which are below the expectations for their age. As a result of this good progress, children achieve well and their attainment is in line with national age-related expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and of those who speak English as an additional language, across the school is good. These pupils receive well-targeted support based on accurate identification of their specific needs.

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

Senior leaders are increasingly able to measure pupils' learning in Years 1 to 3 to identify the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Regular monitoring and evaluation of achievement by senior leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and of intervention programmes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, ensure these pupils make good progress. Teachers in Years 1 to 3 use targets and assessment to set groups for mathematics and the phonics programme. This is beginning to raise attainment in mathematics and reading. However, the use of targets and assessment during lessons in Years 1 to 3 is not consistent in promoting good progress for all pupils, particularly more able pupils, and teachers are not always providing a range of activities that match pupils' learning needs. For example, set phonics sessions in Year 1 provide all pupils with the same activity and do not offer challenge for the more able pupils.

Parents and carers are happy with their children's experiences in school and feel that they are making progress. Inspectors found that the school is not building sufficiently on the children's good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage to enable children to make consistently good progress across the school and attain above average standards. The school's targets are insufficiently challenging to raise attainment.

Quality of teaching

Although the majority of teaching is satisfactory, there are consistent strengths in all lessons. These include teachers' management of pupils' behaviour and engaging curriculum topics, such as the Dr Who time travel project and work on dinosaurs that promote pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Good routines for learning are established in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Here, teachers make good use of regular observations and assessment to match activities, questions and resources to the range of pupils' abilities. Across the school, teachers make effective use of resources, for example modelling new skills for pupils on the interactive whiteboards. Teaching assistants are effective in enabling disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to progress as well as their peers in lessons.

Whilst all teachers question pupils regularly to check their understanding, not all of them ask probing questions to extend pupils' understanding. Where schemes are used for whole-class lessons in numeracy and literacy, especially in writing, they are not adapted consistently to challenge more able pupils to reach higher levels or to support less able pupils. They often restrict the pace of learning as teachers adhere to the planned class lesson, even when the pupils quickly grasp the concept. Comments in teachers' marking help pupils to improve their work. The recently introduced guidelines for assessing pupils' progress are informing curricular targets to enable pupils to know what to do to improve their writing. Their use in lessons is not yet embedded to enable all pupils to recall their targets. Some pupils told inspectors that they did not know how well they were doing and that the targets that were available to them did not help them to improve.

Teaching and curricular topics make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, children in the Early Years Foundation

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

Stage worked very well with their partners in exploring different number combinations to make ten. They shared their cubes and listened attentively to each other, although there were few opportunities for them to apply their new skills independently in the outdoor area. In a Year 3 poetry writing lesson, pupils explored a range of exotic fruit, showing appreciation of their senses. In an assembly, the pupils contributed thoughtful and relevant questions to the headteacher to take back in time in her journey in 'Dr Who's Tardis' and to past pupils who attended the school when it first opened sixty years ago. Good quality displays of pupils' work show their exploration and understanding of other cultures, such as African and Indian cultures.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is a strength of the school. Parents and carers agree that pupils' behaviour is typically good and value the school's swift and effective approach when dealing with any incidents of bullying. Behaviour is managed in a consistent and systematic way that has resulted in strong improvements over time. Pupils are thoughtful and considerate to each other and conduct themselves well around the school. During lessons pupils engage well with each other and do all that is asked from them by the class teachers. Pupils are well cared for and pupils' well-being is a high priority. Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe in the school and that they know all adults will help them if they need it. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory because, while the headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have secured many strengths in the school, they have not been successful in raising attainment over time. This is because they are not setting ambitious whole-school targets to raise expectations and drive school improvement planning. The use of pupils' targets to match all lessons to the range of abilities across Years 1 to 3 is not as well established as in the Early Years Foundation Stage and so progress is inconsistent. Improved systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of individuals and groups of pupils are beginning to raise achievement, but are too recent to show any significant impact. The information is not utilised fully to inform the monitoring of lessons, pupils' work and teachers' planning. Consequently, the school's self-evaluation tends to be over generous, except in the Early Years Foundation Stage where it is based on rigorous assessment of children's learning and progress.

The effectiveness of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, in promoting equality and tackling discrimination, is satisfactory. The leaders and managers are successful in closing the gaps in attainment for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and for pupils who speak English as an additional language, although not for more able pupils. Progress across the school remains inconsistent. Arrangements for safeguarding children are robust. All required staff checks are carried out rigorously and training is up to date.

Engaging curricular experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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

development. Parents and carers feel engaged in, and are fully supportive of, the work of the school. One parent described the school as having a 'quirky, fun approach' to encouraging learning and this positive view was reflected in many parental questionnaires.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of Sylvan First School, Poole BH12 3DT

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we inspected your school and for telling us what you think about your school. I thought you would like to know what we found out. You go to a satisfactory school with lots of good features.

- Most of you enjoy going to school and learning new things.
- Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good.
- Your behaviour is good and the school deals well with bullying and so this is very rare.
- The headteacher and staff take good care of you and make sure learning is fun.

This is what we have asked the headteacher, governing body and teachers to do to make your school even better.

- Help you make good progress by making sure most lessons are at least good and giving you clear targets to aim for.
- Make sure you know how well you are doing and that you understand what you need to do to improve your work.
- Make sure that your work is not too easy or too difficult for you in every lesson.
- Make sure that leaders know as much as possible about how well you are doing in your learning so that you can make the best possible progress.

I wish you all the best and hope you continue to try hard and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Minns
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.