

Simon de Senlis Primary School

Hilldrop Road, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0PH

Inspection dates 20–21 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make enough progress in some of the Year 3 and Year 5 classes, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching does not always make enough use of information about where pupils are in their learning to plan the next steps they need to take to improve.
- A few teachers do not use questions sufficiently well to check pupils understanding of what they learn, especially in mathematics. Sometimes teachers also take too long explaining to pupils what they need to do, limiting the time they have to carry out the tasks, which slows their learning.
- Leadership of Reception and Years 1 and 2 has been inconsistent over recent years and this has led to wide variations in the impact of leadership on achievement in these classes from year to year.
- The governing body has not yet had specific training so as to gain the confidence to question the school sufficiently deeply about achievement in Reception and in Years 1 and 2.

The school has the following strengths

- In most classes, progress has improved in reading, writing and mathematics since the beginning of this school year because the amount of good and outstanding teaching is improving especially in Reception, Year 4 and Year 6. Pupils in these year groups make good progress.
- Pupils with speech and language difficulties make outstanding progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well.
- Senior leaders and the governing body know what the school needs to do to improve. The new headteacher has put a significant number of improvements in place. As a result assessment in the Reception classes is now accurate, boys' achievement has improved and pupils' progress in reading in Year 1 is much better.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 17 different teachers. Six of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also heard pupils from different classes read, and conducted a work scrutiny with the headteacher and the school’s literacy co-ordinator to examine the accuracy of assessment and pupils’ progress.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at assessment information (including progress data from the speech and language resource base), statements of special educational needs, individual education plans, attendance data, the school’s development plan, the school’s monitoring information, a wide range of policies including safeguarding policies, and governing body documentation.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed in the 10 staff questionnaires.
- There were 28 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with information about workshops provided by the school for parents and carers, including the development of technology aimed at enabling teachers, parents and carers to learn together.

Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dennis Brittain

Additional Inspector

Hermione Horn

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above-average sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are slightly below average.
- There is specially resourced provision for 12 pupils with special educational needs. They have speech and language difficulties and moderate learning difficulties.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding from the government for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any other schools or locations to provide education for its pupils.
- The headteacher took up his post at the start of the current school year. He is also engaged in work leading the development of technology in other Northamptonshire schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3 and 5, so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - using the assessment of pupils' skills and previous learning more effectively to plan work that is set at the right level for pupils' differing abilities
 - using probing questions to check pupils understanding of what they learn in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils are moved more quickly from whole-class work to individual or group work that meets their needs.
- Raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics across the school by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - use assessment better to set targets aimed at accelerating pupils' progress in reading
 - accurately assess pupils' writing skills and use these assessments to plan new work so as improve pupils writing skills quickly
 - ensure pupils have a thorough grasp of all new learning in mathematics before building on that learning.
- Improve the leadership and management of the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2 to ensure that the improvements made this school year are sustained by:
 - regularly monitoring the quality of assessment procedures to ensure they are accurate and used immediately to re-align planning to raise achievement
 - robustly checking the quality of teaching and giving feedback to the staff team to increase its effectiveness
 - ensuring that governors receive appropriate training to develop skills, and that they challenge the leadership team more effectively about the provision in these year groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good because of inconsistencies in the rate of progress made in different classes. Progress varies because the quality of teaching varies. In Years 1 and 2, progress has varied widely from year to year. Not enough pupils make more than the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics in some classes in Years 3 and 5.
- In 2012, standards overall were average, but boys did not achieve as well as boys nationally. Decisive action, including specific teaching of boy groups in Year 6, has significantly narrowed this difference for Year 6 boys this year.
- Progress made by pupils who speak English as an additional language is similarly variable. It dips in some classes but consistently speeds up in Year 6.
- Children usually start the school with the skills and abilities expected for their age, although this year, unusually, language and problem solving skills in Reception were below those typical. Their progress so far this year is good, particularly in using verb tenses more accurately when they speak.
- In many lessons pupils are now making good progress. However, in a few classes where work is not matched to pupils' abilities, or activities are dull, not all pupils make sufficient progress.
- Pupils in the resourced provision make outstanding progress, measured against their starting points, in English and mathematics. They are exceptionally well supported in using their lips and rolling their tongues to produce accurate speech. Good relations are fostered. Other disabled pupils and those with special educational needs throughout the school also achieve well by Year 6, because the school provides equal opportunity to learn, and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. It is used to pay for extra, individual support. There are benefits evident in improved attendance and gains in confidence and in turn this is making a positive impact on academic achievement. This group of pupils (known to be eligible for free school meals) in 2012 were only a term behind in English, and had caught up fully with their classmates, in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across the school because not all lesson planning takes account of pupils' different abilities and needs. In a few lessons, pupils are not given work to do at the correct level and so they do not reach their full learning potential.
- Teaching is improving, but isolated pockets of teaching in a few classes fail to excite pupils to learn and do not enable pupils to make the progress required. At times, there is insufficient use of probing questioning and other means to check on pupils' understanding and re-align the method of teaching quickly enough to ensure that pupils make the progress required. Occasionally, teachers spend too long explaining to pupils what it is they have to do when moving from whole class teaching to group activities. This slows pupils learning.
- The teaching of writing remains inconsistent. Not all teachers provide enough help for pupils to achieve their writing goals. Recent work done, to ensure that all teachers assess pupils writing

accurately, is beginning to accelerate progress. Teaching of reading is mostly good, but it is weaker in a few Year 3 and 5 classes where teachers do not always use pupils' current starting points accurately when planning lessons.

- In mathematics lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are usually high. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils were challenged to achieve work typical of secondary-aged pupils. In this inspirational lesson, the highest achievers solved a 'tough' problem in their work on coordinates and successfully justified their answer. But in a few mathematics lessons pupils are moved on to new work before they are ready, and when this happens, they flounder.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the beginning of the school year due to the support teachers receive from senior leaders. There is good teaching evident across a wide range of subjects: including design and technology, French and science.
- Good or outstanding lessons are typified by teachers using what they know about pupils' prior learning to plan suitable activities to move them on quickly. Also in these lessons teachers rigorously check that pupils understand each step of new learning as the lesson moves along at a brisk pace.
- The quality of teaching of pupils with speech and language difficulties is outstanding. Almost all of these pupils do much better than expected nationally for pupils with the same level of difficulty.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are keen to learn throughout almost all lessons. Attendance is above average. Pupils' behaviour is almost always at least good; at times it is outstanding. Only on the few occasions, in lessons that fail to motivate them, do pupils begin to lose engagement, and so become distracted.
 - During lunch, at break and moving around the school pupils behave well. They welcome visitors engaging in interesting conversation. Older pupils take care of younger pupils. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are actively involved in shaping their classroom code of behaviour.
 - Pupils feel safe and can speak confidently with a trusted adult about anything that worries them. Overwhelmingly, parents agree that their children are safe.
 - Pupils say there are no fights and occasional arguments over name-calling are dealt with swiftly. Racist incidents, incidents of swearing and bullying are all exceptionally rare. When such instances do occur they are taken seriously and tackled thoroughly.
 - Pupils have a very good understanding of the different sorts of bullying they might encounter, including phone-based, internet and most types of prejudice-based bullying. They are good at assessing risks and managing their own safety. They know how to keep themselves safe, on the internet, or near water, and on the roads. Pupils understand many of the risks to health related to diet, and drug abuse.
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The leadership and management**requires improvement**

- Leaders and managers have not had the required effect on teaching and learning and as a result, pupils do not achieve consistently well. Recent improvements have not yet had time to show the full positive impact and this is why leadership and management requires improvement.
 - The headteacher's relentless drive to improve teaching is having a positive impact on achievement. Key to this success has been putting in place an accurate assessment system in Reception, developing teachers' skills in the teaching of reading in Year 1 and 'skilling up' teachers through targeted training, where weaknesses have been spotted.
 - The school is beginning to check all aspects of its work accurately and thoroughly. Pupils' progress is monitored extremely carefully. Decisive actions result from this process and benefit pupils' achievement. Senior leaders are now effective. However, last school year, weaker leadership for younger pupils, including the Reception class, contributed to inaccuracies in assessment.
 - The local authority gives the school valuable support in assisting the headteacher's monitoring of performance, helping teachers to assess writing accurately and putting effective systems in place in Reception.
 - Partnership with parents is strong. The initiatives using technology which are led by the headteacher help parents engage more effectively with their children's learning. It benefits both pupils within the school and pupils in other local schools.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is enhanced through the rich range of subjects they study. In assemblies, pupils reflect on the plight and suffering of children in different parts of the world. Then they initiate fund-raising charity events to help such children. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is raised through learning to speak French and visits to places of worship such as a gurdwara (Sikh temple).
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is relatively new as are a number of other governors. Decisive actions taken have already brought about improvements. Governors understand the data on pupils' progress and know how the school is doing compared with others. They have started to ask some 'tough' questions of the senior leadership team. They monitor teaching, and although they have undertaken a raft of training, their training on how to ask specific questions about learning in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 has not yet taken place so that in this aspect, their questioning is not as robust. Overall, the governing body has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and is actively involved in shaping improvement plans. Teachers standards are rigorously checked and any teacher who does not perform well enough does not move up the pay scale. The headteacher's performance is reviewed thoroughly, and he is held to account against the rigorous targets set for him. Governors make sure that safeguarding meets requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121954
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	406068

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	389
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Pignatiello
Headteacher	Thomas Rees
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2011
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