

Southdown Junior School

Mount Road, Southdown, Bath, BA2 1LG

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- The progress pupils make in their learning is uneven between classes and year groups.
- Some pupils do not achieve well enough in writing because too little attention is paid in some classes to the basic skills of spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is appropriate for pupils in the middle attainment band. As a result they do not always receive the support or challenge they need to make good progress.
- Some teachers talk too much and do not give pupils enough opportunities to show initiative or contribute their own ideas in lessons.
- A few teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and accept work that is unfinished or sloppily presented.
- Marking does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work.
- The targets set in action plans for pupils' achievement and attainment are too vague and make it difficult to judge exactly how much improvement has actually been made.
- Although the school checks the quality of teaching rigorously it is too soon to see the impact of actions already taken to bring about improvements in teaching and learning.
- Not enough governors visit the school regularly while the school is in session to have a clear view of how well the school is doing on a day-to-day basis.

The school has the following strengths

- Higher attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in their learning because they receive the right amount of challenge or support.
- The school has been successful in closing the gap for pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, particularly in mathematics.
- The senior leadership team are committed to improvement and have identified correctly where there are weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are keen to learn and respond enthusiastically in class. They say they feel very safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher. She also observed two guided reading sessions as well as looking at the support provided for individuals or small groups in the classroom. She heard pupils from Years 5 and 6 read and discussed their books with them. She also examined the English, mathematics and topic work carried out by pupils during the last year in every class.
- The inspector analysed and evaluated a wide range of school documentation. This included that relating to safeguarding, assessment data, school improvement plans, monitoring records and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and staff as well as the members of the governing body. She also met with the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered the responses to a questionnaire sent out by the school in March 2013 as there were too few responses to the questionnaire on the Parent View website to be recorded and shown. She also considered the views of staff recorded on the eight questionnaires returned by them.

Inspection team

Christine Huard, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Southdown is a smaller than average sized junior school which serves the surrounding area of Southdown on the outskirts of Bath.
- There are five classes, one in each of Years 3, 4 and 6 and two in Year 5.
- The school has a higher percentage of pupils supported through school action than most other schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after pupils thus eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is much higher than the national average. .
- There is an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds although the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The interim headteacher took up the position at the beginning of January 2013.
- The school has no alternative provision. It does, however, provide short-burst intensive support for pupils requiring this in Owl Class within the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to show initiative and contribute their own ideas in lessons
 - having higher expectations of the amount of work that should be completed in a given time
 - expecting work to be of good quality both in terms of content and presentation
 - ensuring that marking tells pupils what they need to do to move forward in their learning and giving pupils time to respond to teachers' marking
 - providing opportunities for teachers to work side by side with the best role models in the school in order to improve good practice.
- Raise achievement in writing, particularly for those pupils in the middle attainment band, by:
 - ensuring that tasks challenge or support them sufficiently
 - improving the basic skills of spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities for uninterrupted extended writing.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school sets targets that are clear and measurable in action plans, especially in relation to the attainment and achievement of pupils
 - providing an external review of the work of the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils are not doing as well as they could and achievement requires improvement. This is because the progress pupils make varies from class to class.
- Not enough pupils in the middle attainment band are making the accelerated progress necessary for them to reach the higher levels of attainment particularly in English.
- Progress in writing, in particular, is not as good as it should be and this was reflected in the results of national tests last summer when attainment in writing was below that of reading and mathematics.
- Middle attaining pupils are not always given tasks that reflect the right level of support or challenge for their needs.
- A few teachers do not pick up elementary mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation, which means that pupils go on making similar mistakes repeatedly.
- Most teachers teach handwriting discretely and ensure that pupils practise their handwriting and follow this through in their work. However, there are a few teachers who do not do this and as a result work is sometimes poorly presented.
- Most pupils in Year 6 have made as much progress already as would be expected in a full school year. This means they are on track to reach the full two levels progress since the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics and some are likely to do better than this.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. This is because daily guided reading sessions provide them with challenges and guidance at just the right level. Pupils enjoy their reading and talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the books they choose to read.
- Since the headteacher took up his post in January there have been several changes made which are leading to pupils making better progress because of improved teaching. There has been a strong focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening and this has been very successful in raising pupils' confidence and in developing their communication skills.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are provided with good support from teaching assistants who liaise and plan carefully with class teachers. Pupils who receive short-burst intensive support in the Owl class do particularly well. Higher attaining pupils also make the progress they should and often achieve well. Teachers ensure they receive appropriate challenges and they respond positively to these.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. In last summer's end of Key Stage tests it was shown that the gap in their attainment and that of their peers had been completely eradicated in mathematics and is significantly smaller than that seen nationally in English. This is because the school has used funding well to provide additional support for pupils on both an individual and small group basis. In addition, the school has subsidised a range of high quality experiences for pupils which they not otherwise be able to enjoy.
- The determination that the school is now showing in trying to improve the quality of teaching and thus achievement, as well as the success of higher attaining pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding, demonstrates the school's resolve to try and ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and that discrimination is not tolerated.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching and learning requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good. There are variations between classes which affects the progress pupils make.
- Teachers do their best to provide tasks which motivate the pupils and sustain their concentration. Sometimes, however, lessons are so teacher dominated that there are few

opportunities for pupils to show initiative and express their own ideas. Occasionally, when teachers do provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas they allow too much time for this and pupils wander off task and begin to discuss other things.

- In a very few classes pupils do not complete enough work during lessons and teachers are too willing to accept work that is poorly presented.
- Marking is of variable quality. While some is informative and useful to pupils it does not always tell them clearly enough what they need to do to improve their work. A few teachers do not consistently expect pupils to respond to their marking or give them enough time in which to do so.
- The school has some excellent role models who provide good or outstanding teaching. This teaching is engaging and fun. Tasks are varied and exciting for the pupils and often include practical hands-on activities. These teachers consistently challenge and question the pupils to move their learning on effectively.
- Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is because teachers and teaching assistants plan closely enough together to find tasks that meet pupils' individual needs that will also fit in with whole-class learning.
- The school has used the pupil premium funding well to provide one-to-one support and some small group teaching. This is helping to develop pupils' confidence and has effectively closed the gaps in their learning, particularly in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they feel very safe at school. They are taught effectively how to keep themselves safe particularly when using the internet.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare. They understand well what bullying is and are knowledgeable about the different forms it might take, such as name-calling and cyber bullying. Pupils know and understand what to do should it occur and are confident that teachers or other adults in the school will sort out any problems they cannot handle themselves.
- Behaviour in and around the school is typically good. The school has a higher proportion than most schools of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The strategies for supporting these pupils are good and highly effective and as a result the number of incidents is very low. There has been a sharp fall in the number of exclusions in the last 18 months.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are strong as they are between themselves. This leads to behaviour in lessons being good. Pupils are keen to learn and their attitudes are good. They work together very well in class and cooperate and collaborate well. They are curious, eager and very responsive to questions and enjoy expressing their own ideas.
- Behaviour is not better than good because some teaching does not stimulate them effectively and when this happens their responses are a little passive.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving and pupils' punctuality is good. The school has a good range of incentives such as class certificates to encourage good attendance. It carefully follows up pupils' absence and robustly discourages term-time holidays.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Since the interim headteacher took up his position he has carried out an effective and accurate evaluation of where the school is and how well it is performing. Nevertheless, leadership and management require improvement. Action plans produced for improvement identify appropriate priorities for development. However, the targets for improvement, particularly in relation to achievement, are too vague and do not provide clear enough targets for the school to measure itself against.

- The monitoring programme which includes lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work and pupil conferencing has identified key areas for improvement. Although it is clearly evident that improvements are occurring, the second round of monitoring has yet to take place and it is a little soon to judge the full impact of actions taken.
- The improvements that have been made and the good and better teaching observed in some classes clearly demonstrate that the school does have the capacity to make further improvement.
- Since the appointment of the interim headteacher the school has received good and practical support from both the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. This has enabled the school to identify key strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and take action to develop more consistently good teaching across the school.
- School documentation shows that there is a clear link between pupils' progress and the way in which staff have moved along the pay scales. The current appraisal and performance management programme is linked very closely to the teachers' standards and the progress that pupils make.
- The curriculum is lively and interesting and appeals to the pupils. The idea of using a book as a starting point works very well and teachers plan interesting activities which range across all subjects. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their learning, appreciate and celebrate each other's accomplishments and gain an understanding of different faiths and cultures.
- The safeguarding of pupils is of a very high priority in the school. All statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met and the procedures and arrangements for the pupils' welfare and their protection are robust.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors know how well the school is performing in relation to other similar schools and the key areas for improvement. They do check on the quality of teaching and hold the school to account. However, they are heavily reliant on the headteacher and other leaders for the information they need to be able to do this. Although a few governors regularly visit the school, not enough of them visit the school when it is in operation to find out for themselves how it functions on a day-to-day basis. Governors are all linked to subject areas and subject leaders attend governors' meetings to report on how well pupils are progressing. Governors undergo training to improve their skills, which means they are more confident to both support and challenge the school. They monitor the finances of the school rigorously and ensure that the money from the pupil premium is used effectively to support these pupils; for example, by providing one-to-one support for pupils as well as purchasing additional resources and equipment to support their teaching and learning. The representatives of the governing body who were interviewed have a clear understanding of the new arrangements for managing the performance of teachers and the link to pay progression.
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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	109004
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	411876

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bailey
Headteacher	Mark Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 May 2010
Telephone number	01225 424761
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