

South Molton Infant School

North Road, South Molton, Devon, EX36 3BA

Inspection dates 23–24 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 rates of pupils' progress are uneven. Not all pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics. Boys in the school have not done as well in reading and writing assessments at the end of Year 2 as boys of the same age do nationally.
- Not all pupils supported by extra funding from the government (the pupil premium) achieve as well as they could.
- Not all teaching is good. Sometimes teachers are not sufficiently clear about what is to be learnt in a lesson. They do not always use information about the pupils' learning effectively enough to spot gaps in understanding and correct them quickly.
- Information about pupils' attainment and progress has not, until relatively recently, been collected efficiently. It is still not being analysed effectively enough in order for trends to be identified accurately and to give extra help to pupils who may be falling behind.
- The roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are not clearly enough defined. This limits their ability to contribute to improving the school.
- The governing body has not had sufficient information about the school's performance to challenge senior leaders. It has not ensured that the pupil premium funding has been used to the best effect.

The school has the following strengths:

- Relationships throughout the school are very positive. Pupils respond well to the good care and support they receive. They enjoy school and behave well.
- Work on the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is now started earlier. More time is spent on it. As a result pupils' attainment and progress in reading and writing is improving. More-able pupils often achieve well.
- The provision for children in the Reception classes has improved and children now achieve well here.
- The school has strong links with the local community. The many activities provided promote pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed 10 teaching sessions taught by six teachers. Many of these were joint observations undertaken with the headteacher.
- A variety of shorter sessions taught by teaching assistants was also observed.
- The inspector held meetings with three members of the governing body and with groups of pupils. A telephone conversation about the school also took place with a representative from the local authority. In addition to a number of meetings with members of staff, the questionnaires completed by nine members of staff were taken into account.
- Twelve parental responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation including the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, curricular plans, a summary of the school's self-evaluation provided by the previous headteacher and the current headteacher's initial impressions of the school and development plans.
- The inspector also looked at a range of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Hazel Callaghan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average infant school.
- Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage and very few are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is larger than that found in all schools nationally. These groups of pupils and those who are looked after children are entitled to additional funding called the pupil premium.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action level is smaller than average, but there is a larger than usual proportion of pupils supported at school action plus. Many of these children have speech and language problems.
- There are no pupils currently with a statement of special educational needs.
- The movement of pupils in and out of the school at times other than the usual is above average.
- A new headteacher took up post at the start of this term, one week before the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring teachers are clear about what pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of each lesson
 - using assessment of pupils' past learning to match learning activities more effectively to their needs.

- Raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics are identified quickly and addressed
 - ensuring that learning activities in reading and writing engage boys as much as girls
 - analysing data about pupils' attainment and progress accurately to identify any pupils at risk of underachieving, such as those supported by pupil premium funding, so this can be addressed quickly.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders so all are able to contribute to school improvement
 - ensuring governors are sufficiently knowledgeable about school performance and the effectiveness of the use of the pupil premium so they can hold the senior leaders to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Many children start school in the Reception class with a narrower range of skills and knowledge than is expected for their age. An above average proportion have speech and language difficulties which sometimes slow their progress. However, children of all abilities achieve well and most are well on their way to reach the skills and knowledge expected by the time they move into Year 1.
- These positive levels of achievement were evident last year and this is a significant improvement on the achievement of children in previous years.
- The results of the check made on pupils' knowledge of letters and their sounds (phonics) in Year 1 last year showed similar levels to the national average and this has supported their skills in both reading and spelling as they moved into Year 2. More thorough teaching of phonics is now helping to improve pupils' progress in both reading and writing.
- The standards reached by children at the end of Year 2 have varied widely over the last four years, from significantly below average to almost above. The school's current data also show inconsistencies in both pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils in Year 1 are making good progress in their writing but satisfactory progress in reading. Pupils in Year 2 are making good progress in reading but less in their writing.
- Pupils do not make good progress in mathematics because there are gaps in their knowledge which hold them back. For example some pupils do not have a secure understanding of hundreds, tens and units or the ordering of larger numbers.
- More-able pupils tend to make better progress than other pupils. Those with special educational needs make progress which is enabling them to tackle new work but not always enough to help them catch up with other pupils by the end of Year 2.
- Similarly variations in rates of progress and levels of attainment can be seen in those who are supported by pupil premium funding. The more able pupils are doing well but there are others who are not.
- Over the last two years many boys have not reached the levels of attainment of girls in the school but have also not reached those of boys nationally in reading and writing. This has been acknowledged by the school and changes have been made in the type of activities given to the pupils to better engage their interest. Their progress is improving but it is too soon to see the impact of these changes on attainment.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is often good across the school but not consistently so and this is causing variations in the rates of pupils' progress.
- Where teaching needs improvement, lesson planning is too much based around the activities that pupils will do, rather than on exactly what pupils should be able to do or know by the end of the lesson in order for them to make good progress. This is particularly the case in English.
- Although teachers do check up on pupils' learning in lessons and adapt the pace where necessary, they do not always take enough account of such information when planning ahead. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where sometimes teachers do not check thoroughly enough that pupils have a secure understanding of a topic before moving on to something new.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is effective in small-group sessions but not always as effective in whole-class situations where their needs are not always clearly identified. The pupil premium funding has not been used specifically to support pupils eligible for free school meals and their achievement is mixed. The more able do well but those who need additional support do not always receive sufficient attention and support in class lessons.

- Teachers have high expectations for more-able pupils and often provide good levels of challenge for them.
- Teachers are confident in their use of the electronic whiteboards which are used to engage the interest of pupils and to help them learn. Video clips and programmes that generate different examples are a positive teaching resource.
- The teaching of phonics is well organised and pupils of similar abilities benefit from being taught in small groups. Children have also benefited from the earlier start to this work in Reception. As a result of these changes, the teaching of reading is improving. Children of all ages enjoy reading and many are developing their skills effectively to support learning in other subjects.
- Teachers' marking has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers use an agreed system of symbols which enable pupils to recognise how well they are doing and how to improve. Most pupils understand that there are targets to help them to get better at their work and say that teachers help them improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in their classes, in assembly, at break times and around the school. In assembly for example, pupils waited patiently for all the classes to arrive, listened to the story of St George with interest and wanted to share their ideas about their 'dragons' and the challenges they have. They are friendly towards visitors and not afraid to ask questions. They listen to each other with interest and enjoy each other's company.
- Pupils say they enjoy their activities and want to do well. Lessons are rarely disrupted by inappropriate behaviour and most show good levels of concentration and attention.
- Pupils recognise that some children are quick to fall out with each other but have no concerns over bullying. Any name calling tends to be part of an upset or loss of temper rather than bullying.
- Most say that children are quick to look after each other especially the young ones in Reception.
- Pupils say they feel very safe at school. This is because all the staff look after them well. However they do understand that they need to be particularly sensible in certain situations. The regular visits from outside organisations such as the police and RNLI help them understand how to keep themselves safe.
- None of the parents or carers who contributed to the Parent View questionnaire had any concerns about bad behaviour or bullying.
- Attendance is similar to the national average. There are very few persistent absentees. The school has clear guidance about holidays in term time.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The headteacher, who took up post at the beginning of this term, has quickly formed an accurate view of the school's performance, including the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the gaps in information about pupils' progress. He has not been in the school long enough to have made an impact on raising achievement or improving teaching but he has ensured that the data are up to date, complete and ready for thorough analysis.
- Because information about pupils' attainment has not been complete in the past, analysis of pupils' progress has not been sufficiently robust to ensure that senior staff and teachers have the information they need to tackle underachievement and or to analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- Teaching assistants play a positive role in promoting pupils' progress especially those with special educational needs. They take careful note of the each child's progress, discuss this with

teachers and together they adapt the programmes of work to match individual needs. However, although the progress of individual pupils is checked up on, the progress of this group as a whole is not analysed. As a result school leaders do not have an overview of the overall effectiveness of this aspect of the school's work.

- Leadership of different subjects and of other areas of responsibility has been allocated to different staff but they do not have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which limits the extent to which they can contribute to improving the school.
- Monitoring of teaching, including the use of performance management, has been carried out regularly but has not ensured that teaching is consistently good. In lesson observations, not enough emphasis has been placed on the quality of pupils' learning.
- Some improvements have been made to aspects of teaching. External support has been used to develop the skills of observing children's learning in the Reception classes, and teaching and learning have been improved.
- Since the first phonics check for pupils in Year 1 took place last year, the English coordinator has monitored the teaching of phonics and made several changes. Work now starts earlier in Reception and more time is allocated so that the programme of work is fully covered. These changes are already having a positive impact.
- The teaching of subjects and of additional activities is well planned to provide a good range of interesting activities that extend pupils' knowledge and skills. Strong links with the community and many additional activities, focused week-long topics and visits provide many opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils eagerly raise money for different charities. They compiled a joke book which was sold in aid of Comic Relief, for example.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has tended to rely on the previous headteacher for information about the school's performance. Governors have attended some training but not specifically in the analysis of school data. This means that they have not been in a strong position to challenge aspects of the school's performance. They have however discussed their concerns about the lower attainment of the boys and are aware of the strategies recently put into place to engage boys more in their learning.
 - Governors have been involved in discussions about the use of pupil premium money and agreed that class sizes should be reduced in order to promote the progress of all pupils. However, they have not done enough to challenge the school to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy.
 - Governors are effective in planning strategically for the school. They had a clear view of what the school needed in its new headteacher and the appointment process was well organised to support the selection process. They are currently exploring the possibility of the school growing to become a primary, given the planned increase in housing locally.
 - Information about the process of staff performance management has been shared with governors but there has been little opportunity to extend teachers' salary or responsibilities over the last few years.
 - Governors play an effective role in ensuring safeguarding procedures meet requirements and in monitoring health and safety.
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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	113168
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	412665
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jean Foster
Headteacher	Mr Tom Parkin
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2010
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