

# Southtown Infant School

Tamworth Lane, Southtown, Great Yarmouth, NR31 0HJ

## Inspection dates

20–21 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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 quality of teaching is inconsistent, and not enough is good to promote good achievement.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher do not always monitor the quality of teaching rigorously enough to pick out weaknesses, especially in the teaching of writing. Consequently, teachers are not always given precise points for improvement.
- The work teachers plan in lessons does not always cater for the full range of different ability levels, especially for pupils who are most or least able.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in writing.
- Teachers do not give enough emphasis to widening pupils' vocabulary and ensuring they use their good knowledge of letter sounds (phonics) to help them spell. Also, they do not give pupils regular practice in dealing with words that cannot be spelt using letter sounds, such as 'come' and 'said'.
- The governors give the school good support and know a lot about how well pupils are taught, but not enough about data to fully challenge leaders about pupils' performance.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has brought about considerable improvements in pupils' achievement in mathematics and reading this year, especially in Year 1, and in pupils' attendance.
- Relationships are good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and helpful.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes, particularly in developing their personal and social skills.
- Pupils who attend the specialist resource base make good progress due to good teaching and the expertise of speech therapists.
- Parents who spoke and wrote to inspectors are very proud of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons. In approximately half of these sessions, teachers or teaching assistants were focusing on developing pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills in small groups selected by ability.
- Inspectors observed a session in the specialist resource base, and talked to pupils and staff including the speech therapist.
- The inspectors looked closely at pupils’ work in Year 2 and shared books with some Reception and Year 1 pupils.
- The inspectors held meetings with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and groups of pupils from the school council and Year 2. They spoke informally with many pupils during lessons and at break times.
- A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked carefully at safeguarding documentation, information about pupils’ progress, including that made by pupils in the specialist resource base, leaders’ judgements on the school’s strengths and weaknesses and their development plans.
- The views of the 12 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 10 parents spoken with at the start of the school day were taken into consideration, as well as several emails and letters from parents.
- The views of 34 staff who completed questionnaires were also noted.

## Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Ubsdell	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a below-average-sized primary school serving the local community. It has six classes.
- For the past four years, there have been more boys than girls in the school. In some year groups, there are considerably more boys than girls.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This consists of a specialist resource base for ten pupils aged four to seven who have speech, language and communication difficulties. The base serves a wide area. Typically, pupils attend for about three terms and then return to their 'home' school. They attend from Monday to Thursday each week, and spend Fridays in their home school. Staff from the base provide advice for the home schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A high proportion – almost half the pupils – are supported by government funding through the pupil premium. In this school it caters for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, or cared for by the local authority.
- Since the last inspection and within the last year, the whole senior management team has changed apart from the headteacher. Half the teaching staff are new to the school. Almost half the governors are also new this year.
- The school provides a breakfast club for its pupils, with free places for those known to be eligible for pupil premium funding

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

- Improve teaching to a consistently good level to raise standards, especially in writing, by:
  - ensuring that all staff focus sharply on encouraging pupils to use the letter sounds they know to help them spell
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to practise spelling phonically irregular words
  - using a wide range of texts and methods to widen pupils' vocabulary
  - giving pupils enough time to respond to their teachers' comments on how to improve their work
  - always giving work to more-able pupils that makes them think hard
  - keeping lesson introductions brief.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - monitoring teaching more rigorously so that staff can be told precisely what they need to do to improve their practice
  - using the special needs coordinator's expertise to monitor teaching for pupils who have additional needs more effectively, so all staff are aware of small changes in their practice which can make a big difference
  - giving the governing body suitable training to develop their understanding of performance data.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Until recently, not enough pupils have been making good progress. Attainment in the national teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 has generally been significantly below average over the last five years, and attainment in writing has been consistently below the levels reached in reading and mathematics. Pupils have not been making the progress they were capable of during their time in school.
- The results of the 2012 national check on how well pupils in Year 1 can understand and use phonics in reading were below average. However, the school's new method of teaching phonics had only very recently been introduced. Its latest data indicate that the current Year 1 pupils have made good progress from a low start this year, and are attaining at a level expected for their age in both reading and mathematics. They are doing much better in terms of phonics, and have already exceeded the 2012 national average.
- The school tracks pupils' progress very carefully. The results show that pupils in Year 2, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, have made at least the progress expected nationally in reading and mathematics. Teachers' most recent assessments show that attainment has risen this year, and is broadly average in both subject areas.
- Achievement in writing has also improved, but not yet enough. Teachers do not do enough to widen pupils' vocabulary or encourage pupils to use their good knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell. Also, they do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise spelling and using words that cannot be spelt by using phonic strategies alone.
- Pupils quickly make good progress in the specialist resource base. Expert input from speech therapists and good teaching helps pupils to communicate more easily, which in turn leads to them making outstanding progress in building their confidence and self-esteem. Parents are extremely pleased with how well their children are doing, and the support and information they are given.
- When children start in the Reception classes, their skills and understanding are considerably below the levels expected nationally for their age, especially in the areas of personal development, speech and communication and literacy and numeracy. About half of the children have not attended any pre-school or nursery provision.
- Reception children make outstanding progress in developing their communication and personal skills. Adults take every opportunity to model good speech and praise good social skills. Consequently children soon learn to share, take turns and communicate well with their friends and adults. They are positive about learning. Since the introduction of the systematic teaching of phonics, most make good progress in developing their early literacy skills. Those who have additional needs and are still at the very early stages of learning literacy and numeracy skills do not always have access to the precise teaching methods they need to make good progress.
- Until this year, pupils supported by the pupil premium have not done as well as their classmates. For example, in reading they were about two terms behind in 2012. However, the headteacher's decision, backed by the governing body, to use pupil premium funding to teach mathematics and phonics systematically from the time children start school is increasing progress considerably this year. The gaps in attainment are closing rapidly, particularly in reading, and eligible pupils' attainment is now similar to that of their classmates.

**The quality of teaching****requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching varies too much across the school. These differences mean that pupils are not enabled to make good overall progress.
- Teaching in nearly half of the sessions and lessons observed was good, but in all the others it required improvement. This was typically because of staff not always demonstrating or expecting pupils to use letter sounds to help them spell. Also, they do not always make sure pupils learn and correctly spell words that are phonically irregular, such as 'come' and 'said'.
- The great majority of pupils start school with a limited vocabulary. When they write, they do not have a wide range of words to draw on to make their stories and poems exciting. Teachers are not providing enough opportunities for pupils, especially the most able, to overcome this barrier by learning and using a wider range of vocabulary.
- Teachers mark their pupils' work and tell them how they can improve it. However, pupils are not always given time to consider their teachers' comments and respond to them.
- Some teaching of more-able pupils, and of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, requires improvement. More-able pupils are not always provided with work to make them think hard. For those who struggle, not enough attention is paid to making sure that the methods used match the way the pupils learn. For example, staff do not always make sure that pupils can easily see and use resources to help them in their learning.
- Where teaching is good, teachers do not keep their pupils sitting on the carpet too long and set very high expectations for pupils to work at a good rate. In these sessions, they always set extra challenges for more-able pupils.
- Teaching in the specialist resource base is consistently good. When pupils start at the base, most have poor communication skills. All staff focus on building pupils' confidence. Expert and very regular speech therapy sessions soon help pupils to speak more clearly. Good teaching of basic skills, with many opportunities for practising what they have learned in different situations, gives pupils good foundations for the future.
- All staff have established good relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy in class and are keen to learn. They know that staff will help them if they have difficulties, so they do not hesitate to ask for help if they need it.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****are good**

- Pupils are pleased to be part of the school community, including those who attend the specialist resource base. They respond well to teachers' expectations to be kind and thoughtful of others. They are friendly, courteous and respectful. They are keen to work hard in lessons and please their teachers. Even when lesson introductions are too long, they do their best to listen attentively.
- All of the parents and carers who responded agree that their child enjoys school. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and they have a good understanding of what constitutes the various forms of bullying. They are confident that if they have concerns, any member of staff will help them.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy taking on responsibilities throughout the school and do so very conscientiously. They offer thoughtful responses when given the opportunity to reflect on spiritual or moral issues in lessons.
- The number of exclusions has decreased considerably. The school has changed its approach to dealing with a small number of pupils who have difficulty controlling their behaviour. This has been very successful, and pupils' learning is not disrupted.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. The headteacher and parent support worker take a firm line on discouraging absence which has been fundamental to the significant improvement in attendance since the last inspection.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management are not yet good, because the improvements noted in pupils' progress and attainment have only been made this year. The headteacher and senior team have not yet demonstrated that their strategies can sustain these good rates of improvement, and increase pupils' progress in writing.
- The newly-formed senior leadership team monitor teaching and help teachers, especially those at the early stages of their career, to improve their practice. However, their monitoring is not always rigorous enough to pick out precise points for teachers to work on, especially in the teaching of writing.
- The recently appointed leader responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has considerable expertise, and had already been in charge of the specialist resource base for some time. This expertise is not yet being used to full effect to help teachers and teaching assistants improve the way disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are catered for in everyday lessons.
- The specialist resource base itself is well established and led well. Key strengths are the highly skilled teacher and teaching assistants, and very strong links with parents and carers, key professionals, such as speech therapists and the home schools. Staff make sure pupils are familiar with the base before they start and are supported back into their home school when they return. Parents and carers are kept well informed on a daily basis about how well their children are doing.
- The headteacher provides good leadership with a strong commitment to making sure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to do well and there is no discrimination. The headteacher tracks pupils' progress in detail. Data about pupils' progress and attainment is used to good effect to hold teachers to account for how well their pupils make progress, and if it is enough.
- Leaders use data well in their improvement planning to set challenging targets for pupils' progress and attainment. These targets are likely to be met this year, and the current Year 1 pupils are on track to meet the considerable challenges set for the end of Year 2 in 2014.
- The range of taught subjects meets the needs of the pupils well. The strong focus on helping them to develop secure literacy and numeracy skills is having a good impact in reading and mathematics. A good range of trips to various places of interest provide memorable experiences

and widen pupils' horizons.

- The breakfast club is partly paid for by the school's pupil premium funding. It provides a good start to the day for those who attend, with a good choice of food and activities.
- The school works very hard to involve parents in their child's education and is increasingly successful. Those who spoke with or wrote to the inspector are very pleased with all the school has to offer and particularly, as one wrote, the 'unbelievable progress' in reading.
- The school has had no direct support from local authority, which does not consider it to be a school causing concern.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are thorough in making sure that they perform their legal duties, including the safe recruiting and vetting of staff and balancing the school budget. They know the school well and make good use of their individual professional expertise in supporting it and asking questions. They check on spending decisions carefully, including the use and impact of pupil premium funding. Governors are provided with detailed information by the headteacher and, from this, have a general awareness of pupils' progress. However, they have not had training in how to interpret the data themselves so do not know how well, for example, the school's performance compares with that of similar schools nationally. Therefore, they are not in a position to fully challenge the school's leaders. They are aware of the quality of teaching and the strategies used for helping teachers to make further improvement, as well as how the school rewards good teaching and deals with any underperformance.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121010
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	412590

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	186
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Leigh Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elaine Glendinning
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 April 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01493 653908
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