

South Petherton Church of England Infants School

Church Path, Hele Lane, South Petherton, Somerset, TA13 5DY

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils make an excellent start to their education. By the end of Year 2, their attainment in all subjects is above average. Teachers offer the right degree of support and challenge to all groups of pupils, so progress is consistently excellent, including for those supported by pupil premium funding. This represents outstanding achievement.
- Teachers use their excellent knowledge of pupils' interests and needs to prepare engaging learning experiences. Lessons are purposeful and fun. Pupils show a great appetite for learning and listen closely to what teachers say. This means they get on with their tasks enthusiastically and their learning is outstanding. Very occasionally, planning lacks the required detail and lessons do not run as smoothly as they should.
- The marking of pupils' work is outstanding. Pupils' efforts receive detailed comments that offer both praise and constructive advice. Time is offered for pupils to read these comments and act on them, this has a very positive impact on their progress.
- Excellent behaviour is the norm. Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school and know they are well cared for. Relationships between pupils and with adults are almost universally excellent; as one pupil reported, 'Bullying very rarely happens.'
- The headteacher's quiet determination and commitment to the school's policy of 'growing together' have been fully adopted by all members of the staff team. Checks on teaching and pupils' progress are accurate and have led to a relentless drive to raise standards. The school has made positive strides since its previous inspection and its plans for the future are relevant and achievable.
- The governing body undertakes regular checks on all aspects of school life. Members' analysis of this information enables the governors to ask challenging questions of school leaders and to participate fully in the school's decision-making process.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited eight lessons taught by four teachers and undertook four joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, parents and carers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- The inspector examined numerous school documents, including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 24 parents were analysed through the Parent View website.

Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized infants school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is below the national average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British origin and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils (lessons that take place regularly away from school).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so it always promotes rapid progress by ensuring that lessons in all subjects are thoroughly planned to provide the optimum pace and challenge to all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Positive links with local pre-schools ensure children's needs and aptitudes are well known when the children arrive in the Reception classes. Careful planning ensures very well-organised lessons and provides the correct support to each child. This helps all groups make excellent progress.
- Children in the Reception classes quickly start to identify letters and begin to read. They soon start to develop an understanding of numbers and how they work. As well as rapidly gaining these basic skills, children develop good learning habits that prepare them very effectively for more formal education as they enter the National Curriculum. For example, they learn to share, to work together and to be independent when required.
- The pattern of excellent teaching continues in Key Stage 1. Skilled teaching assistants are perceptively deployed to offer support where it is most needed. This plays a significant part in ensuring that the most able pupils are kept at full stretch and those who need additional help receive it. One positive outcome of the challenge for the most able is the above-average proportions of pupils gaining high levels in end of Year 2 national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment in mathematics has historically lagged a little behind that in reading and writing. The school has acted to improve mathematics teaching, particularly through training both teachers and teaching assistants. There has been a steady rise in mathematics attainment in the past three years and it is now above average, as it is in reading and writing. When compared with national averages, pupils' progress is exceptionally strong in all three subjects.
- The way reading is promoted across the school is a considerable strength. Pupils are given every encouragement and opportunity to read a variety of texts and, typically, quickly become confident in handling books and familiar with the printed word. Their attainment, as demonstrated in the national Year 1 screening check, is well above average.
- Given their starting points, this pattern of consistently above average attainment represents outstanding achievement for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils in receipt of additional funding (the pupil premium) benefit from well-targeted extra resources. Principally, they gain from increased small group support from teaching assistants. The school keeps very careful records of the impact of such interventions and of the other support offered. These clearly indicate that this group achieve as well as their peers and that the attainment gap to other pupils in the school is closing. In 2013, this group was approximately two terms behind their peers in writing and mathematics and a little more than this in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from the school staff's in-depth understanding of their needs and the well-judged support they receive. This ensures that their achievement is consistent with other pupils. In this way, the school ensures equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination.
- Pupils' achievement in physical education is improving; it benefits from additional funds available from the primary school sport funding initiative. Well-qualified sports coaches teach sessions to pupils and train staff. The funds also permit the school to offer additional sporting opportunities to pupils in a local gymnasium.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is of an exceptionally high standard and, typically, classrooms are very good places to learn. Positive relationships promote a 'can do' atmosphere where adults and pupils work together very effectively to ensure rapid, sustained progress.
- A fundamental strength to teaching is the excellent marking of pupils' books. Much of pupils' work is marked promptly and in depth. This has two significant benefits; firstly, pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work; secondly, teachers have an in-depth

understanding of how well each pupil is learning and this enables them to adjust their teaching to meet each pupil's needs.

- Teachers use this and other assessment information to plan lessons that offer the correct degree of challenge and support to all. This invariably involves deploying the skilled teaching assistants to help those in the greatest need, whether they are struggling to learn or require additional challenges to reach higher attainment levels. Most lessons are planned in depth, especially in English and mathematics. However, sometimes planning in other subjects is less detailed and, on a few occasions, these lessons are less pacy and challenging.
- Confident, authoritative teaching from teachers and teaching assistants is the norm. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers prepare varied, stimulating activities with good resources that run at a brisk pace. Staff make what is to be learned crystal clear and pupils happily strive to meet teachers' high expectations. The imaginative use of homework from the Reception year onwards promotes independence, a love of learning and involves parents constructively in their children's learning.
- Teachers question pupils throughout lessons to check and develop their understanding. Interactions with pupils are warm and supportive; teachers are models of courteous behaviour, fostering good relationships. Pupils reflect this with their kindness to one another and their very evident enjoyment of working together. They are quick to support and applaud the efforts of their classmates.
- An outstanding Year 2 mathematics lesson typified many of the strengths of teaching. Four levels of addition and subtraction tasks ensured all pupils were well challenged and four adults ensured each group had additional assistance close at hand. The closing session for the whole class consolidated and extended learning very well, with brisk tasks followed by a 'test question' that enabled the teacher to check on the excellence of all pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have almost universally positive attitudes to their work and display a strong love of learning. This has a very favourable impact on their progress, particularly because it means there are no disturbances to the smooth running of lessons.
- Behaviour in lessons, around the building, in the dining hall and on the school playgrounds is generally impeccable. Close relationships exist between pupils and with all adults. For example, lunchtime staff have been trained to lead play at lunchtime, and do so with enthusiasm, giving many pupils good opportunities to 'let off steam' before settling down to learning again.
- Pupils report they are very happy at school; this view is fully supported by parents and staff. One pupil reported, 'Its very kind here, everyone is kind.' They appreciate the school's method of sanctions and rewards to keep everyone behaving well, and report teachers are helpful, saying, 'We always have fun at our school.'
- Pupils have a very good knowledge of how to stay safe, appropriate to their age. They know how to take care on the narrow country lanes around the school and are aware of the potential risks of the internet. They show a very strong understanding of how bullying can make lives a misery, but report that it is virtually unknown in any form at the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's reflective, yet rigorous, approach to school improvement is fully adopted by all staff. Accurate checks are rapidly followed up to address concerns. The school uses its good understanding of its pupils and itself to plan effectively for the future. It receives good support from the local authority and has the capacity for continuing improvement.
- Regular, accurate checks are made on pupils' attainment. These are carefully recorded and trends identified, often using colour coding to identify where progress is rapid or slow. Staff routinely act on this information. Meeting as a team, they identify where individuals may be causing concern and establish what should be done. In many instances, blips in progress initiate

additional support. The impact of these actions is carefully followed up to ensure that they have been effective. The data is also used to hold teachers to account for 'their' pupils' progress.

- Teaching and learning are also subject to thorough checks. Lessons are regularly observed and are often used to trigger support and training for individual staff. This has 'raised the bar' for teaching and all staff now strive for excellence, so many lessons are outstanding. There has also been a positive impact on the skills and confidence of teaching assistants, who make a major contribution to ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve their optimum.
- Parents and carers are most satisfied with the school and have no significant concerns. Many report that the school and its staff are very open about its activities; they appreciate opportunities provided by the parents' forum to express their views and ask questions. Staff express great pride in what they regard as their school.
- The mixture of subjects and activities the school offers is well suited to pupils' tastes and needs. Joint planning by all staff ensures that topics are interesting and adaptable to pupils' views as they grow. The school promotes good links with the village; for example, the 'visit' of a dragon to South Petherton was embraced by the local library and shops and promoted very good opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively.
- Visits to places of educational interest near and far, including London, broaden pupils' horizons. An 'out and about club' helps selected pupils learn to cope with the wider world. The school also provides a good range of sporting opportunities, both during the school day and from a number of after-school clubs.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are carefully planned. Assemblies take the lead in introducing themes such as caring for others, and these are followed up in lessons. Pupils are actively encouraged to reflect on others and their plight.
- The school raises money to support a school in Africa and is developing links with this school and another in West London. Religious festivals are marked and celebrated, promoting a better understanding of the multicultural nature of the country in this predominantly White British area.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body use a variety of methods to maintain an up-to-date picture of the school. Checks on teaching keep them well informed about the quality of lessons and they are well aware of the links between teachers' performance and their pay progression. Good training enables governors to fully understand the numerous sources of information about pupils' achievement and they know where their achievement stands in relation to national averages. The governing body is involved in the allocation of pupil premium funds; the governors follow this up carefully to check on the results and to ensure that it gives the best possible value for money. Well-managed systems enable governors to maintain a close check on health and safety and help to ensure that the school meets all safeguarding requirements.

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	123854
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	426820

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

Type of school	Infants
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Ward
Headteacher	Lisa Farley
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2008
Telephone number	01460 240750
Fax number	01460 241316
Email address	office@southpetherton-inf.somerset.sch.uk

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