

Siskin Infant and Nursery School

Nimrod Drive, Gosport, Hampshire, PO13 8AA

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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, including those who are more able, do not achieve well enough, especially in writing.
- Although pupils are now making better progress overall, their progress is generally more rapid in reading and mathematics than in writing, and faster in Year 2 than in Year 1.
- In the Reception class, attainment is lower in writing than in other areas of learning.
- The school does not have arrangements to set targets for pupils. Consequently, pupils do not understand what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment.
- Although teachers give pupils guidance about how to improve their work, pupils do not have opportunities to put advice into practice.
- Teachers do not consistently set high expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils understand what is required for successful work when they set writing tasks for pupils.
- Pupils do not have consistently good opportunities to write at greater length or for different purposes.
- The school is not making full use of all existing leadership roles to enhance its capacity to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths:

- Pupils are now making better progress as a result of the improving quality of teaching.
- Children get a good start in the Nursery. There is a strong emphasis on developing skills that promote good learning.
- The teaching staff in the Nursery and Reception class are offering children greater challenge, resulting in improving progress.
- Attendance has improved to broadly average.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is good and they feel safe.
- The drive of successive executive headteachers and the leadership skills of staff from the junior school have supported leaders, managers and governors in ensuring the improvement of teaching and achievement.
- Governors' improved understanding enables them to hold the school to better account.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in eight lessons, of which two were joint observations with the interim executive headteacher and the headteacher of the federated junior school. The inspector and the interim executive headteacher also scrutinised a sample of pupils' English work. The inspector heard a sample of pupils in Years 1 and 2 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school's staff, the vice chair and Chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the curriculum committee, and also with a representative of the local authority.
- The responses to the online survey (Parent View) were too few to be representative of parental opinions. The school has not recently conducted any survey of parents' and carers' views, of which account could be taken.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to the questionnaire for school staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, planning documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding, performance management, the pupil premium, the primary sports funding and the curriculum.

Inspection team

Chris Grove, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is an infant school that is much smaller than average in size.
- The school serves a community that forms part of an urban regeneration project, completion of which has been delayed by changing economic circumstances. This has resulted currently in lower pupil numbers as some families have been temporarily rehoused outside the area.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and the children of service families, is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is also well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school formed a hard federation with Siskin Junior School in autumn 2010. The two schools share the same governing body. The headteacher of the junior school became the executive headteacher of the federation from September 2012 until December 2013 when she left in order to take up another post. From January 2014, the experienced headteacher of a local primary school has taken on the role of interim executive headteacher for three days each week. The current head of the junior school leads the school for the other two days. The governing body is presently in the process of making an appointment to the post of executive headteacher.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been extensive changes in the school's teaching staff, including the appointment of a new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage (the Nursery and the Reception class). The school has occupied new buildings, in which the nursery and reception areas, in particular, have been extensively remodelled.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater impact from teachers' feedback about how pupils, including the most able, could improve the quality of their work through:
 - better use of target setting so that pupils develop a closer understanding of what they need to do in order to reach higher levels of attainment
 - improved opportunities to respond to and put into practice teachers' advice from marking.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing across the school, in order to match their more rapid progress in reading and mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - set consistently high expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work
 - give pupils better opportunities to practise writing at greater length and for different purposes
 - ensure that pupils understand what is required for successful work when they set writing tasks for pupils.
- Enhance the school's capacity to continue to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by delegating responsibility to, and requiring full accountability from, all existing leadership roles.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although pupils have made better progress, particularly since September 2013, their attainment remains well below average, with the result that achievement requires improvement.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2013 was well below average in reading and mathematics, and most especially in writing, as it had been in earlier years. More-able pupils, in particular, have not done as well as they should.
- By contrast, pupils are now making faster overall progress than previously. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are similarly making more rapid progress.
- However, pupils' progress has mostly been better in reading and mathematics than in writing, and more rapid in Year 2 than in Year 1.
- In 2013, Year 1 pupils' performance in the phonics screening check improved considerably and was closer to average. Of those who retook the check, a higher proportion reached the expected level of attainment than was the case nationally. In Year 2, reading results improved, and a greater proportion attained the higher levels.
- Children's knowledge and skills on entry are typically well below those expected, especially in their use of language and in early literacy and mathematical skills. In the current year, children's overall progress in the Reception class is good. Their personal skills and skills in listening and speaking and in reading are developing well, so that attainment is on track to be closer to average. However, attainment in writing is appreciably lower than in other areas of learning.
- Those children who attend the Nursery get off to a good start in acquiring the skills necessary for success, such as learning to listen attentively, to tidy up carefully and to form good relationships with adults and other pupils.
- Pupils enjoy their participation in physical activities. For instance, pupils in the mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class took part enthusiastically in a dance lesson where they made good progress in meeting the physical challenges set for them.
- In assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2013, the gap in attainment between those supported by the pupil premium and other pupils widened in reading and more considerably in mathematics when compared with 2012. This represented a gap of about one term in reading, and two terms in mathematics. In the case of writing, in contrast, the gap closed and was almost eliminated. Current pupils eligible for the premium are making progress similar to that of others, particularly in reading and mathematics, from comparable starting points at the beginning of the year.
- The school spends its pupil premium funding appropriately to fulfil its commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. It has used the funding principally to provide additional small-group tuition by a part-time teacher and by assistants. The funding has also supported provision of a home-school link worker and an emotional literacy support assistant, and has subsidised educational visits for eligible pupils and participation in the breakfast club.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it has not in recent years resulted in good achievement in literacy and mathematics.
- The school does not have arrangements to set pupils targets in reading, writing or mathematics. As a result, pupils do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment. This is one reason why teaching has not been as effective as it could be.
- Teachers regularly mark pupils' work conscientiously, and give pupils guidance about how to improve the quality of their work. However, the impact of teachers' guidance is limited because pupils do not have opportunities to put into practice the advice given.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of writing. Teachers' expectations about the presentation of pupils' work are too variable. Too many pupils are careless about the formation of letters and the joins between them and about the neatness of their handwriting. However, in a short but

well-judged session, one teacher carefully modelled correct formation and joins for pupils before they practised. Other pupils would benefit from wider access to good practice of this kind.

- Teachers do not always ensure pupils are clear about what is required for successful writing work, or communicate this clearly. Moreover, teachers do not consistently give pupils good opportunities to practise writing at greater length and for different purposes. These weaknesses lead to pupils' slower progress and lower attainment in writing.
- Despite these shortcomings, teaching has had markedly better impact in the current year, resulting in improved progress. The school's leadership has successfully addressed the principal weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, teachers now consistently plan a better match of work to pupils' previous attainment, and consequently have improved challenge for all groups including the most able. Furthermore, lessons are now typically well paced and maintain pupils' interest.
- The teaching and support staff in the Nursery and the Reception class are adept at building good relationships with children and at discussing productively with them the activities that they carry out. In addition, there is now also improved attention to promoting children's communication and reading skills, although writing skills remain less well developed.
- The improving results in the phonics screening check and in reading at the end of Year 2 point to greater success in teaching phonics (the links between letters and sounds). Weaker readers in Years 1 and 2 often show sufficient phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words successfully.
- The members of staff who participated in the survey were unanimous in agreeing that the school successfully meets pupils' individual needs. The staff rightly recognise the good pastoral care that the school offers to pupils as well as the improved capacity to meet pupils' learning needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are mostly very attentive in lessons, and say that behaviour has improved and that the great majority behave well. Teachers mostly manage unobtrusively the few pupils who occasionally find concentration difficult. All members of staff who returned a questionnaire judged that pupils' behaviour is consistently well managed.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school, and are courteous towards visitors. At break times in the playground, they behave well and return to lessons in an orderly way. At the midday break, the atmosphere is calm as pupils eat lunch. In assembly, they listen thoughtfully and respond well to opportunities for involvement and reflection.
- Pupils speak warmly about the school. The positive ethos leads to their good attitudes to learning. School staff are skilled in fostering good relations with pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils spoken to say that they feel safe in school and would speak to an adult, should they ever feel unsafe. The school teaches them how to keep safe and how to deal with risks such as those associated with internet use. In the staff survey, all agreed that children are safe.
- Pupils understand the persistent nature of bullying. School staff address quickly the few cases of bullying that occur. In their survey responses, the staff were unanimous in agreeing strongly that the school deals effectively with bullying. There have been no exclusions for two years.
- Attendance has improved very considerably since the previous inspection and is now broadly average, as a result of the good impact of the federation's home-school link worker.
- The breakfast club offers healthy food options, and encourages good attendance by providing a positive start to the school day.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because action to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement has not yet had sufficient impact, despite pupils' recent better progress. The school is not making full use of all existing leadership roles and has not assigned

significant responsibilities for improving aspects of teaching and pupils' achievement to all leaders and held them fully to account.

- At the time of the previous inspection, the former executive headteacher had already identified the school's main weaknesses through accurate self-evaluation, which the school was addressing through appropriate improvement planning and the close monitoring of teaching. Since then, extensive changes in the teaching staff have led to the better quality of teaching.
- The interim executive headteacher has built well on these foundations. Improvement planning continues to be of good quality, and teaching has improved further because the main weaknesses that were identified when the school was last inspected have been effectively addressed.
- The school's federated status has enabled both the executive headteachers to provide support by involving leaders from the junior school. These arrangements have worked well. The special educational needs coordinator, and the leaders for English and mathematics in particular, have provided good support. The school has benefited from the appointment of an experienced leader to the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is resulting in improved provision and better progress across the stage.
- The school holds half-termly meetings to review all pupils' progress. Where senior leaders identify weaknesses in pupils' progress, they advise class teachers about strategies for making improvements or provide additional support for pupils. Senior leaders also regularly monitor the quality of teaching through classroom observations. Together, these measures ensure the accountability of teachers.
- The school's curriculum is based on a commercial set of teaching units, and this has been closely linked to the vision for the Siskin Learner, which emphasises the development in pupils of such characteristics as 'respect', 'adaptability' and 'resilience'. This vision serves to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The school makes effective use of its primary sports funding, and has arranged for a private contractor to offer multi-skills provision in which pupils show a good level of interest. In addition, Portsmouth Football Club is starting to run coaching sessions. The school is keen to promote pupils' physical well-being.
- The school maintains a rigorous focus on all aspects of safeguarding and child protection, which fully meet statutory requirements. Furthermore, leaders are meticulous in ensuring that vulnerable pupils, in particular, are well supported.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has judged that the school's circumstances merit high-priority support. Local authority staff have given considerable support, especially in aspects of English, mathematics and Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The school has recently been the subject of a detailed review by the authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very supportive of the school, has a detailed understanding of its context and is pleased about its positive ethos. Governors meet their statutory obligations. They understand the importance of their role in managing the headteacher's performance, and are better informed about how effectively other staff are appraised, and whether salary progression is merited. They know what support has been provided to improve teaching and address underperformance. As a result of training undertaken and improvements in the executive headteachers' reporting to governors, they are more knowledgeable about the impact of teaching, and about the implications of national information on the school's performance. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent, and are aware of its positive impact. The governing body subscribes to the local authority's training arrangements in order to maintain its effectiveness. Governors acknowledge the importance of holding the school to good account, and have the increased confidence to do so effectively.

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	116174
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	441923

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue MacDonald
Headteacher	Joy Squibb
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 February 2013
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