

Southtown Infant School

Tamworth Lane, Southtown, Great Yarmouth, NR31 0HJ

Inspection dates

8–9 July 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Southtown has improved rapidly since the previous inspection.
- Children settle quickly in the Reception classes and make a good start to their education.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in reading and good progress in writing and mathematics because teaching is good and, occasionally, outstanding.
- Pupils behave well because lessons are interesting and they enjoy the way they learn.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and know staff will take care of them.
- Teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is effective because all staff have been fully trained so they know what to teach and how to teach it.
- School leaders and governors have rigorously monitored the quality of teaching and pupils' standards and made the changes necessary to bring about the recent improvements.
- Governors are much more effective than at the time of the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils, including the more-able, are not given the harder work they need, especially in mathematics. Occasionally, a few pupils become bored and lose concentration.
- The quality of teachers' lesson planning varies; not all set out clearly enough the precise steps that pupils are to cover in the lesson.
- Teaching assistants are not always as effective as they could be, particularly when the teacher is explaining the lesson to the whole class. When working on specific activities, they are not always properly prepared for the groups they are meant to be supporting.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors sampled parts of seven lessons, six were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- In addition, the inspectors visited all 13 reading and writing groups and five mathematics groups. Inspectors also looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other staff, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, letters and other parental views. The responses to 23 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from the pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Janet Watson | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Southtown is a smaller than average-sized infant school.
- Each year group has two classes.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is high; it is nearly twice the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high, over twice the national average.¹
- The school hosts a specialist resource base for 10 pupils aged four to seven who have speech, language and communication difficulties. The base serves the surrounding area. Pupils attend from Monday to Thursday every week, and spend Friday in their 'home' school. They are expected to attend for a maximum of four terms and then return to their 'home' school, on whose roll they remain throughout their time in the base.
- The school runs a breakfast club before school.
- In September 2014, the school will open a Year 3 class as the first stage in becoming a primary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils make consistently rapid progress by making sure that teachers:
 - set work in mathematics that is hard enough to challenge the most-able pupils sufficiently
 - plan learning activities that are consistently stimulating and set out precisely what pupils need to learn so that pupils know what they are to do and are fully engaged in the lesson at all times and other adults working in support of individual pupils understand what they should focus on
 - teachers check that teaching assistants and other additional adults fully understand their roles in all parts of the lesson and check that they are thoroughly prepared when working with groups and individuals.

¹ The school no longer uses the classification 'School Action' for the first level of special educational need.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children start in Reception with skills and experiences which, overall, are well below those typically seen at that age. They are keen to learn and want to please their staff by answering their questions and doing as they are asked. This year, the majority of children are expected to make a good level of development before they join Year 1. The proportion has more than doubled from the previous year.
- Standards at the end of all three year groups increased in 2013 from 2012 and are set to increase again in 2014. The school has developed a well-thought out approach to reading and all teachers teach reading effectively. As a result, pupils make progress at a much more rapid rate than expected, so they often exceed the level expected by the end of Year 2. Phonics (the sounds letters make) are taught systematically across the school. In the 2013 Year 1 screening check, most pupils achieved the expected level. Results in 2014 are likely to be similar.
- More recently, the techniques used to support reading have been extended to writing and are proving equally effective. This year, the vast majority of pupils will reach the expected level by the end of Year 2, and a similar proportion to the national figure are on track to exceed it.
- The effective way teachers work with small groups ensures they are able to give more time with any pupil needing extra help, so that any misconceptions are spotted quickly and corrected before the pupil becomes confused.
- The teaching of mathematics is generally well-organised but not always quite as effectively as it is in English. The vast majority of pupils are expected to reach the expected level by the end of Year 2. A smaller proportion than the national figure are likely to reach a higher level because these more-able pupils are not always receiving the harder work they need to make the quicker progress they should.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs progress well because extra help is given that is very carefully matched to each pupil's needs, and regularly checked to see that it leads to improvement. Pupils in the Resource Base make very good progress because tasks are carefully chosen to stimulate talk. Teachers are sensitive to these pupils' needs and are increasingly developing their specialist expertise so that they can help these pupils cope with the communication difficulties they face more effectively and hence achieve well.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding achieve well. These pupils are making even quicker progress than other pupils and are closing the gaps between their attainment and that of the others. In reading, they have almost caught up. In writing and mathematics, they are about half a term behind. These gaps are about a third of those a year ago.
- Additional sports funding has been used well by the school to enable pupils to learn new skills and techniques in a range of sports and to ensure they understand the benefit of vigorous exercise.
- School leaders regularly review the progress made by individuals and every group of pupils. Any not doing as expected are given extra help. This careful checking has ensured the least-able pupils and those of middle ability to consequently make good progress, but there is scope to increase the support given to the most able and thereby enhance their progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in Reception is very effective and the basis for the much improved proportion of children achieving a good level of development. Activities are carefully structured and children are very clear what is expected from them, particularly in how they go about the tasks they are given to do. Teachers and assistants work closely together and, in contrast to the rest of the school, are wholly clear about their roles and what the children are expected to achieve in each session.
- Teaching in the Resource Base is very good. Staff form a very effective team, taking every opportunity to encourage pupils to talk about what they see and feel. During the inspection, these pupils joined in a repetitive story and helped pack a suitcase for an imaginary holiday. Items, such as 'flip-flops,' were chosen very carefully to develop children's speech and vocabulary.
- Most teaching is effective because teachers followed the school's agreed procedures consistently well. The thorough training they receive means all staff understand and implement the methods used to teach reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, as pupils move through the school, any new learning builds methodically on what they know already, and ensures they are familiar and comfortable with the structure of the lesson.
- Teachers are very focussed on learning. They make sure pupils fully understand what they have learnt and what they need to do next. When talking to one another, after observing a lesson for example, their comments are directed to identifying how well pupils are learning and what caused it to be as it was. This is promoting more effective learning and teaching.
- The usefulness of teachers' planning varies. Some teachers ensure that their plans set out in detail the precise steps all pupils, including those who find the subject hard and those who find they understand it quickly, will need to take so that all staff understand what to focus on. Other plans, however, lack this level of detail and merely list the activities to be covered.
- Teaching assistants fully understand what they are expected to achieve in the short sessions they lead themselves. When working in classrooms under the direction of teachers, however, they are not always clear what they are expected to do when the teacher talks to the whole class nor how they are expected to support individuals and groups to move pupils' learning on during class activities.
- Some more-able pupils are given tasks that are too easy. In one research activity during the inspection, for example, these pupils were given straight-forward questions that did not challenge them sufficiently and they found the answers quickly. Only when they engaged in discussion amongst themselves were more searching questions explored that developed their understanding to new levels.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have a mature understanding that a small number of pupils need to be treated slightly differently because of their individual needs, and make allowances for them. There have been no exclusions this year.
- A few pupils sometimes struggle to manage their behaviour or their feelings, for example the disappointment in being left out of a team. The school's work to train pupils to be aware of their emotions, and to manage them, is generally successful. When it is not, staff use their good knowledge of each pupil's needs to support them effectively so that they are able to manage

their behaviour better and re-engage with their learning.

- Attitudes to learning are generally good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and proud of their successes. They pay attention to their teacher's marking and the pointers to help them improve. Staff and pupils generally have very positive relationships; most pupils want to please their teachers and time in lessons is rarely wasted. On occasions, however, when the lesson is not sufficiently well-planned or stimulating, a small minority of pupils can become bored and restless.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, whether cycling on the road or using the internet.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils are very supportive of one another. They enjoy the regular opportunities to praise one another's successes and positive traits.
- Older pupils help those younger than themselves, for example organising and leading games at lunchtime.
- Attendance is much improved and is now at the expected level. This is largely because the school offers incentives to pupils to improve their attendance and because the parent liaison officer is relentless in ensuring healthy pupils are in school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a highly effective team with complementary skills. They have analysed the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and have taken largely successful steps to bring about improvements where these are needed.
- Subject leaders are increasingly effective. The teacher responsible for the resource base is very knowledgeable and uses her skills to the benefit of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs throughout the school. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly strong because children are regularly assessed and given extra help if needed so that they all make the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and a good proportion exceed it. The leadership in the specially resourced provision is equally effective and ensures teachers working there know their pupils well and support them effectively, both in term of their academic attainment and in their personal development.
- The leadership and management of teaching is much improved since the previous inspection. It is now regular, thorough and rigorous. Information from one source, such as an analysis of work in pupils' books, is carefully compared with information from other sources so the school is confident it has a complete and accurate picture. If necessary, leaders tackle underperformance vigorously; offering help, and checking on a very regular basis that it is having the desired effect.
- School leaders have re-organised the school day to give more time in the mornings to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, which pupils then practise later in the day in other subjects. The school's use of the natural links between subjects is proving beneficial. Subjects often include a visit so pupils see at first hand, and understand more clearly.
- Staff know the school has improved and are proud to be members of staff. They appreciate the way that each change is understood and embedded before the next is introduced.

- Sports funding is used effectively. Staff work alongside specialist coaches, so they learn new techniques. Pupils enjoy the increasing range of activities.
- The partnership with parents is strong. Parents are pleased their children are making good progress and a good number accepted the invitation to hear about the school's approach and then to watch it in action. The school seeks to involve all parents, for example ensuring the new website enables parents who speak English as an additional language to have information translated into another language.
- Local schools work together to the benefit of staff and pupils. Pupils have extra opportunities, for example to participate in an environmental project at the high school. Across the schools, the expertise and resources for special educational needs in one school are available to all.
- The local authority recognises the improvements being made by the school and the guidance it has offered has therefore been limited but appropriate.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have improved their effectiveness since the previous inspection. In particular, they have undertaken training so they have a better understanding of information about the school on which to base their decisions. They have increased the range of governors' skills through careful recruitment to include many important aspects such as human resources and finance. They place these governors in positions to utilise these skills. They have re-organised their visits to make the best use of governors' time. They are very clear about how additional funds, such as the pupil premium, are spent. They monitor spending very closely and work with school leaders to gain value for money, for example through the lease of the minibus used for pupils on numerous stimulating visits. Governors make sure staff pay is linked to performance and are clear how underperformance would be tackled. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the part played by performance management. They are forward-thinking, plans for the primary school are well advanced and they are discussing how the governing body needs to be reorganised to be more effective. Governors see that all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to the safeguarding pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 121010 |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 450832 |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 186 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Leigh Taylor |
| Headteacher | Elaine Glendinning |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20 June 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01493 653908 |
| Email address | office@southtown.norfolk.sch.uk |

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