

# Siskin Infant and Nursery School

Nimrod Drive, Gosport, Hampshire PO13 8AA

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| <b>Inspection dates</b>                      | 10–11 May 2016       |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>          |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Good                 |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good                 |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good                 |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Good                 |
| Early years provision                        | Good                 |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Everyone in this school does their utmost to make sure pupils learn in a happy and supportive atmosphere. Pupils are nurtured and encouraged. Anything that gets in the way of learning is sorted out quickly.
- Senior leaders have been clear-sighted and shown zest and determination to improve the school to good. Weaker teaching has been supported, or tackled, successfully. Good teaching prevails.
- Children are taught well and make good progress in the early years. Teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes plan varied and interesting activities for children to encourage their learning, curiosity and wider development.
- Good teaching continues in Years 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes the pupils who are most able.
- Leaders and governors set their sights high and provide good leadership. Governors have sharpened their skills and knowledge to help them be more effective. They ask pertinent questions about teaching and pupils' progress and provide the right degree of challenge.
- Pupils behave well, get along together happily and try hard in lessons. Pupils' safety and well-being have a high priority. Pupils know that they only have to tell an adult if they feel worried or upset.
- Leaders and teachers check each pupil's progress at regular intervals. They have been successful in helping pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed, particularly in Reception and Year 2.
- Adults teach early reading and speaking skills well, from Nursery onwards. Adults use a good variety of approaches to encourage pupils to talk.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In Year 1, some pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have not yet caught up with where they should be because they did not make good progress in their Reception Year.
- Pupils' attendance is below average. Some pupils miss too much school.
- While leaders and teachers have, rightly, focused on English and mathematics, other subjects have not been taught as regularly in Years 1 and 2.

## Full report

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

- Improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Year 1, so that the gaps between these pupils and those nationally who are not from disadvantaged backgrounds close entirely in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve pupils' attendance so that it is at least average for all year groups, and reduce the proportion of pupils who miss more than 10% of sessions (persistent absence).
- Improve pupils' achievement in subjects beyond English and mathematics by ensuring that pupils' experiences are as broad and varied in Years 1 and 2 as they are in the early years.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher and head of schools have both steered the school's improvement effectively. They have faced up to, and dealt with, challenge and kept a firm eye on what needed to be done to provide a good education for the pupils. Their clarity of vision and determination make a clear difference because staff know the school's priorities and the part they need to play in bringing them to life.
- In almost all cases, parents who completed the online questionnaire expressed happiness with all aspects of the school's work. Every single parent who spoke to the inspector praised the school and said how happy their children were. The quality of communication between parents and staff came through strongly as a feature that parents very much appreciate.
- Pupils' happiness and well-being are clearly an important part of all adults' work in this school. Staff are vigilant and quick to pick up on moments when pupils may need a little extra emotional support or encouragement. Pupils who are encountering difficult times or who are in vulnerable circumstances are watched over carefully. Adults act as good role models for pupils, showing by their own demeanour how they promote good relationships. Consequently, the atmosphere in classrooms and around the school is positive, purposeful and friendly.
- Senior leaders have focused sharply and successfully on improving the quality of teaching. In every classroom, you see a consistent approach, whether this applies to how pupils are expected to behave and relate to one another, or how pupils find out whether or not they have done good work that lesson.
- Leaders' relentless focus on the quality of teaching has had a clear impact on improving the standard of pupils' work. The improved attainment that arose in Year 2 last year is being sustained well for the pupils currently in Year 2. Leaders have made good use of the extra funding the school is allocated specifically for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the past, these pupils have fallen too far behind, but this is definitely not now the case in Year 2 or in the early years, although there is more work to be done for some of these pupils in Year 1.
- Teachers' performance is managed well. Pay awards are given careful consideration by leaders and governors. Weaker practice is tackled and not allowed to continue if it affects pupils' learning. New and less experienced teachers, and learning support assistants, are supported and advised so that they develop their skills and influence on pupils' learning. In several cases, parents who have volunteered to help in school have then been inspired to train as learning support assistants to broaden their contribution to school life.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. When observing teaching, leaders give helpful, constructive feedback to teachers. They help teachers consider how pupils' learning can be improved when giving points for development. Teachers readily reflect on their practice and welcome this degree of professional discussion, clearly seeing themselves as part of the solution to making teaching even better.
- Teachers who hold leadership responsibilities demonstrate similar drive and energy as the senior leaders. The early years leader has had a marked impact on leading the early years team and improving children's experiences, opportunities and progress. Some of the middle leaders are relatively new to their roles, but have not lost any time in identifying what needs to be done.
- The senior leaders who are leading mathematics on a temporary basis check how well things are going in a systematic and thorough way. When they look at pupils' books, class by class, any points for development are followed up when the books are next scrutinised. This approach is not quite as well established in English. Nevertheless, the leader for English has focused effectively on making sure that the revised national curriculum for reading and writing has been successfully introduced and has identified several aspects that have needed refining or adapting on the way.
- The relatively new curriculum and assessment arrangements are bedding in well. The executive headteacher and head of schools have identified precisely which aspects of the mathematics curriculum are not quite as consistent as they want them to be. They know what needs to be done, and work to strengthen these aspects is well under way.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully through varied activities and opportunities. The arrival of a paramedic and ambulance prompted great excitement for the children in Reception during the inspection. Although there are limited extra-curricular clubs, planned opportunities such as this, and a visit from an author, for example, clearly help to broaden pupils' experiences, interests and understanding of the wider world. The good example that adults provide, day by day, and the steps they take to respond to pupils' concerns, questions or ideas also support pupils' wider personal development effectively.
- The additional funding from the government for physical education and sports has been used appropriately to provide special sessions with sports coaches and extra resources for the pupils to use. Pupils have had opportunities to experience activities such as gymnastics and to practise important skills to help their coordination and control. Above all, they have had opportunities to use new resources and equipment in a fun way, for the sports fun day for example, to show them that physical exercise is important, enjoyable and healthy.
- The senior leaders and staff have, rightly, been giving the most attention to reading, writing and mathematics while the school has required improvement. Although other areas of the curriculum are covered, pupils do not experience the other subjects as often. The time is now right for the breadth and depth of the curriculum to be developed, particularly science and the more creative aspects of the curriculum.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governors have provided good strategic leadership and played a clear role in checking that the school has been on track to move to good. Governors have taken on additional training over the last year or so to develop their skills and influence. They have also recruited governors with skills that complement and extend those already present within the governing body's membership.
  - Governors have been determined to put right some of the weaker aspects relating to governance that were identified at the last inspection. Extra training and support, through the local authority and a local national leader of governance, have had a positive impact.
  - There is plentiful evidence that governors ask challenging questions of leaders. For example, governors asked why attendance had declined and pursued various lines of questioning to find out what was being done and whether it was showing improvement. They also wanted to check how well the curriculum was promoting British values. They questioned whether they were covering their duty to protect pupils from being drawn into situations that might expose them, at a later date, to radicalisation or extremism.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are vigilant and aware of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe from risk and potential harm. Senior leaders and governors make sure that everyone is suitably trained. Staff who were asked by the inspector what action they would take, in different scenarios, knew exactly what to do should they become concerned about a child's welfare and safety. Leaders make sure that records are kept appropriately and securely. They work closely with a range of agencies and are persistent about following up referrals to assure themselves that everything is being done in a timely and coordinated way.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching quality has moved on and strengthened considerably since the last inspection and is now consistently good.
- Pupils learn in a supportive, lively and purposeful atmosphere. Teachers communicate their own enthusiasm for whatever is being taught, as a means of demonstrating and encouraging good work attitudes for the pupils. The pupils respond by settling down promptly to tasks, particularly when they have to work on their own without an adult sitting at their table. They are keen to do their best, and their books show that this is a typical feature of pupils' learning.
- Teachers are adept at using their knowledge of pupils' different stages of learning, or specific stumbling blocks, to determine what they need to learn next. The pupils' books show that teachers are picking up on any misconceptions, in mathematics for example. This is routinely happening as lessons progress so that pupils can put things right on the spot and see how they are getting better at tricky calculations or problems in mathematics.

- Leaders make sure that teachers' assessments are checked, sometimes by the leaders themselves or through using colleagues from the local authority. In this way, leaders assure themselves and the governing body that the judgements teachers make give an accurate and reliable picture of pupils' learning. The regular reviews of pupils' progress and the way that teachers use assessments to guide their teaching are clear factors in pupils' good progress and improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Developing pupils' speaking skills and extending their use of the spoken word run as a clear thread through all adults' work. Adults are good at interjecting with questions, ideas, suggestions or simply a word of encouragement here and there, to prompt pupils to talk and express themselves. This is particularly relevant, and crucial, for the pupils who are not yet as fluent and confident in their language and communication skills as they need to be. The early and regular focus on developing talk is having a positive effect on pupils' writing, as they learn new vocabulary and different ways to build and extend their sentences.
- Teachers make sure that their learning support assistants are briefed well and know specifically how they should promote pupils' learning in each lesson. Learning support assistants have a positive impact on the learning of individuals and small groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. They pick up on pupils' difficulties, with reading words for example, and help pupils to use the skills they have learned in sessions on phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) to work out difficult words. They also remind pupils of the key features that the teacher is looking for when they write and this helps pupils feel a sense of success.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. During the inspection, the inspector saw many examples of adults supporting and encouraging pupils in often subtle but effective ways. Pupils who attend the breakfast club have a positive start to their school day. Those who have moments in the day when they find being in the classroom difficult are quietly taken on one side and given individual support to help them recover and return to their learning.
- Children leave the early years interested in learning, experimenting, exploring, trying things out and working out how to approach a problem. Good learning habits continue to be fostered as they move to and through key stage 1.
- Pupils are keen to do their best and work hard. They stick at tasks and show pleasure in their successes. Several approached the inspector spontaneously to show how proud they were of their writing or their neat handwriting.
- Pupils talk about how important it is to get along with each other and be friendly. They know that the school's 'rules' are there to help the school be a happy place in which to learn. Pupils feel safe in school. Any moments of unfriendly or unkind behaviour are sorted out quickly. Many pupils told the inspector that they can always tell any adult if they feel concerned or upset and that the adult will help.
- Through activities such as the school council and helping out with routine jobs around the school, taking the register to the office, for example, pupils learn to contribute to a community in a positive way. Pupils in Year 2 know that it is important to make the right choices and not be swayed by situations that might take them down the wrong path.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They form good relationships with one another and help to make the school a cheerful place. This applies as much during playtimes and lunchtimes as it does during lessons.
- Pupils throw themselves enthusiastically into activities such as the singing assembly, or singing a song together when the teacher feels they need a stretch and a break. They enjoy these opportunities and participate with clear enthusiasm and joy. Even when a particularly exciting action song is under way, they do not let themselves become over excited and soon settle down when the adults ask them to.

- Attendance slipped in 2015, after improving during the previous year. There was also a sharp increase in the number of pupils who missed too much school. These dips occurred mainly because of some irregular attendance in Reception and Year 1. The senior leaders and governors have been quick to tighten up the school's procedures to encourage reliable attendance. These have not had time to lift attendance to where it needs to be, although there are early signs that it is starting to pick up.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved considerably. From first entering Nursery or Reception, children make good progress in the early years. This continues in Years 1 and 2, where it applies to reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment in Year 2 showed a marked rise in 2015, to broadly average, after many years of being well below average. The latest assessments for pupils currently in Year 2 show that the improved picture is set to continue. These pupils did not do very well when their knowledge of phonics was checked last year. However, almost all have caught up quickly with their reading this year and extra support is in place for those who need more practice.
- Many children start Nursery and Reception with skills, knowledge and experiences that are not as secure as would typically be found for their respective ages. However, by the time they leave Reception, most have made good progress and caught up. Those who enter the early years at a more typical or advanced stage in their development also make good progress.
- Leaders and teachers continually focus on how well each pupil is learning and making progress. Adults clearly want the pupils to have every chance of succeeding and doing well, irrespective of their needs and backgrounds. This commitment to equality is reflected in the improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The very wide gap between the pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and other pupils nationally reduced dramatically in 2015. The latest assessments show that gaps have reduced further for the current Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. There is, however, further work to be done for some of these pupils in Year 1 if the good work to close the gaps is to be sustained.
- The most-able pupils achieve well because provision has strengthened for this group. In 2015, more pupils attained the higher Level 3 than before. The assessment arrangements have changed this year nationally, and direct comparisons can no longer be made with previous years. Nevertheless, pupils' books and assessments show that the most-able pupils are making good headway with their learning, and that those who are capable of coping with more depth and challenge are doing so.
- Pupils who need to catch up, including those with special educational needs or disability, are supported well in lessons. Overall, they make good progress. However, the extra sessions (interventions) that some pupils receive to support their reading and writing do not have such a strong impact. Leaders have spotted this and have, rightly, tightened up the way that the various programmes are checked so that they can be adapted or changed if necessary.

## Early years provision

is good

- The early years leader has provided clear, determined and focused leadership to develop the provision and improve teaching. Consequently, this year, more children are on track to exceed the goals for the early years by the time they leave Reception.
- Across Nursery and Reception classes, children's learning and development are fostered effectively for all areas of learning. The wide gap that existed last year for children from disadvantaged backgrounds has been narrowed this year. This group of children are moving to Year 1 in a much better position than those who entered Year 1 last year.
- Children have a positive experience in Nursery and Reception. They are given plentiful and varied opportunities to encourage their learning and development, whatever their skills and experiences when they start school. Some children enter school with a lot of catching up to do, particularly in their communication and language, emotional and social development, ability to manipulate tools and resources, and their wider awareness of the world around them.

- Teachers quickly find out what children need on an individual basis, and adapt their plans to help them. Any particular difficulties or barriers are identified and steps quickly put in place to help the child overcome these. On occasions, this may mean support for the family or engaging the help of other agencies. Teachers draw on a range of help in these situations, always with the child's best interests at heart.
- All adults are good at encouraging children's personal, social and emotional development. They are caring and supportive when children become temporarily upset and give comfort and encouragement until the child is ready to merge back into the activity. Adults are attentive to children's welfare and safety. They step in gently if they see a child who may not be moving or acting safely, and explain or demonstrate to influence the child's actions.
- The outside areas have seen considerable development over the last year. They are used well to provide a range of enticing and purposeful activities. Children enjoy making choices, exploring different resources, making things, engaging in role play or just sitting quietly with a book in a cosy corner. The outside areas are used well to encourage different skills to help children handle pencils or tools, through digging the soil searching for 'dinosaurs' in Nursery, for example, or using proper tools in Reception.
- The key skills of reading, writing and working with numbers are developed well both inside and out. Talk is encouraged at all times and this is a strong feature of both settings. All adults know that communication and language is a focus area for many children, given their limited speech when they start. Most adults promote talk very effectively through asking questions, engaging in role play, or demonstrating how to pronounce a word or extend a short phrase into a sentence. Occasionally, though, adults let children's incorrect pronunciation pass without helping the child to speak clearly, or miss golden opportunities to help children to build an even better phrase or sentence.
- Early reading skills are promoted successfully and, if children are busy learning a new sound in the phonics session, they have the chance to practise writing these or reading them to reinforce their knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent. A key priority for the school has been to improve writing. It is clear that this very much begins from Nursery and Reception onwards.
- This improvement is down to the sharp focus of early years staff on individual children's learning and development and the quest to enable each child to succeed and do as well as they can while in the early years.

## School details

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 116174    |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Hampshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10012288  |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Infant   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–7  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 152  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Sue Macdonald  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jill Rosenblade (executive headteacher), Alison Lockwood (head of schools)       |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 02392 581777   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.siskinschools.com">www.siskinschools.com</a>                 |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:admin@siskin-inf.hants.sch.uk">admin@siskin-inf.hants.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 24–25 April 2014   |

## Information about this school

- Siskin Infant and Nursery School is federated with Siskin Junior School, which shares the same site.
- The executive teacher and head of schools were seconded to the infant school from January 2015 and appointed to the permanent posts from April 2015.
- Four out of six teachers have been appointed since the last section 5 inspection. The early years leader took up position in September 2015.
- The governing body is responsible for the breakfast club, which runs each morning.
- Children attend the 22-place nursery in the mornings. Most transfer to one of the two Reception classes.



## Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed pupils' learning in every class. Almost all visits were conducted jointly with either the executive headteacher or the head of schools. Pupils' work was examined in writing and mathematics and examples of children's work in the early years were scrutinised. The breakfast club was also visited.
- The inspector reviewed a range of key documentation, including leaders' summary of their own evaluation, evidence about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, records relating to keeping pupils safe, and reports following visits by governors or representatives of the local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke to pupils, staff and parents, to gauge their views of the school, and took into account 11 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

## Inspection team

Margaret Dickinson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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