

Inspection of a good school: Southsea Infant School

Collingwood Road, Southsea, Hampshire PO5 2SR

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most parents are appreciative of what two parents referred to as their 'beloved neighbourhood school' and 'the staff that go above and beyond' for their children. Undoubtedly, the school is committed to making sure that pupils feel safe, cared for and valued, while receiving the very best education, and that these values are 'lived not laminated'. Pupils are right to trust adults to look after them and deal with any worries they may have. They learn to understand and manage their feelings. Friends from many different backgrounds play and work together happily. Pupils' views are valued. The school council members were consulted during the recruitment of the new headteacher. They have been instrumental in the fundraising for, and the design of, the new environmental area.

A rolling focus on 'perseverance', 'collaboration', 'independence' or 'aspiration' keeps the school's 'learning powers' in pupils' minds. They develop an age-appropriate understanding of the attributes they need to demonstrate to be 'sailing into success' with their studies. This ambition has not, so far, been fully realised. Not enough pupils have acquired the basics of reading quickly enough in recent years and writing standards have been below average. The curriculum beyond English and mathematics needs further work.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is emerging with renewed strength from a period of leadership turbulence and staffing turnover, on top of the challenges presented by the pandemic. Expectations have been reset. Behaviour is managed well so that classrooms are calm and conducive to learning. Pupils show that they are 'ready (to learn), respectful and safe'. Messages to parents are clear that their children should not miss vital minutes or days of learning

without good reason. The school is persistent and sensitive in equal measure in tackling punctuality and absence with individual families.

Equality is woven through daily life. It is evident in the care taken to identify additional needs as early as possible and tailor provision. Well-planned professional development is deepening staff's understanding of the challenges some pupils face. Pupils learn to respect difference. They are quick to speak out if they think someone is being treated unfairly because of their skin colour or gender. Pupils learn about other cultures and religions. Visits and visitors broaden their horizons and give them experiences that they may not otherwise have.

Early reading is taught precisely, starting as soon as children join Reception. Teachers keep a close check on pupils' learning in class. Pupils hone their skills by reading books that match the sounds they have learned. They develop a love of reading by sharing other books, aptly marked with a heart, with their family. This school year, staff are explicitly teaching pupils to apply their phonics knowledge throughout the day. Extra support for pupils who have not kept up is carefully matched to their needs. Already, pupils are starting to catch up. The new spelling programme is helping pupils transfer their phonics skills to their writing. Similarly, in mathematics, teachers check pupils still remember what they have learned previously. There is a greater focus on deepening pupils' understanding by encouraging them to explain their thinking or how they worked out their answer.

Pupils are not learning as well as they should across the full curriculum. The school has worked hard to redesign the curriculum to build pupils' learning from the start of Reception through to the end of Year 2. Staff turnover and competing demands on time mean, however, that the school has not got as far as it intended. The content does not always fully reflect national curriculum requirements. In some subjects, there is not enough guidance about exactly what should be covered in each topic and how. Sometimes, teaching approaches and resources do not help pupils learn as well as they might. At times, there are deviations from agreed programmes. Monitoring has not given the school a clear enough picture of teaching and learning beyond English and mathematics.

New leaders have an accurate and realistic picture of the school and know exactly what needs to happen to improve pupils' learning further. The fact that teaching in English and mathematics is stronger this school year is proof of that. They know that it is important to develop the role of subject leaders to play their part in the improvements needed. The governing body members are not as clear about the scale of what needs to be done. They have not fully taken on board information they have been given or been sufficiently challenging. The updating of some policies and statutory information has slipped.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff are not guided well enough in some foundation subjects to ensure that pupils' learning is sequenced from lesson to lesson, week to week and term to term. The quality of implementation is variable. Pupils do not retain key information. The school needs to ensure that teachers know what to cover, when to cover it and how best to cover it, so that pupils' knowledge and skills build over time.
- Improving the curriculum in the foundation subjects has not been as high a priority as English and mathematics. There is not an accurate enough picture of provision and learning in the foundation subjects to inform further developments. The school needs to ensure that it monitors the implementation and impact of the curriculum carefully.
- The governing body has not taken sufficient account of all the information available to it. Governors have an overly optimistic view of the school's performance. They need to ensure that they maintain a clear picture of provision and outcomes in order to hold the school to account for the improvements needed.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	116200
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10296221
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave Russell
Headteacher	Rebecca Holmes
Website	www.southsea.portsmouth.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been two changes of permanent headteacher since the last inspection. The current headteacher had been in post for three weeks at the time of the inspection. Prior to her starting, the deputy headteacher, who joined the school in September 2022, was acting head for a term. Almost half of governors are newly appointed this school year.
- Half of the class teachers have joined the school since the last inspection; two this school year. The vast majority of teaching support staff are also new since the last inspection; many this school year.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to eight pupils with speech, language and communication needs. It does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, care and health plan is above that seen nationally, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who also leads on inclusion, and the early years leader. The inspector also met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult and considered the school's plans in other subjects.
- Parents' and staff's views were gathered using Ofsted's surveys. The inspector also met with pupils and staff during the inspection. They talked to pupils while observing breaktimes and lunchtimes and with staff as they went about their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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