

INSPECTION REPORT

SONNING CE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sonning

LEA area: Wokingham

Unique reference number: 110016

Headteacher: Mrs L A Green

Reporting inspector: Mrs J M Hooper
15334

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st May 2003

Inspection number: 246960

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	LigugéWay Sonning Reading
Postcode:	RG4 6XF
Telephone number:	0118 9693399
Fax number:	0118 9697298
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon CG Clarke
Date of previous inspection:	8 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
15334	Mrs Julie Hooper	Registered inspector
14032	Mrs Marion Saunders	Lay inspector
20948	Mr John Linstead	Team inspector

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the riverside village of Sonning. It is a smaller than average primary school catering for boys and girls between the ages of four and eleven. Most of the pupils who attend the school are from Sonning and the neighbouring village of Charvil. Currently there are 173 pupils on roll, including ten reception children who attend part-time. The number of pupils on roll is considerably more than at the last inspection when there were 104. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the normal times is slightly above the national average, at 15.5 per cent. The pupils are in six classes. Children enter school with a wide range of differing experiences, but in general their attainment on entry is broadly average tending slightly to above average. The school has identified 13 per cent of pupils as having special educational needs, which is below the national average; three pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need, which proportionally is in line with the national figure. Seven pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils are eligible for free school meals. There has been a high turnover of staff in the last two years with seven teachers leaving and five appointments. However, the current members of the teaching force have been in the school for a year creating a more stable situation. The school gained a School Achievement Award in 2001 and is working towards the Healthy Schools Award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Sonning Primary is a popular school promoting strong Christian values. It provides a safe and friendly environment that strongly supports learning and is totally inclusive so that all pupils are treated as individuals with their own rights. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although in reception it is good and, in the class of older pupils, it is frequently very good. By the time they leave the school, many pupils are achieving standards in English, mathematics, science and music that are above those expected for 11 year-

between pupils and with staff. Most pupils enjoy being at school and are well behaved and keen to learn. The headteacher provides effective leadership and has the full support of the staff, governors and parents in the aim of raising standards. She is committed to creating a team spirit within the school where all members of the school community feel valued. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school are good so that the entire school community is committed to raising standards.
- The school provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a caring environment, so that pupils develop good relationships with each other and the staff, good attitudes towards their work and good behaviour; this enables them to make good progress in their learning.
- The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and make a very positive contribution to their children's education.

What could be improved

- The role of the subject co-ordinator so that teachers are fully involved in supporting the management of the school, especially in the rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching, so that all teaching is raised to the level of the best.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to the parents and carers of all pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in December 1997 the school has addressed the key issues well and successfully maintained most of the strengths identified in the last report. Standards in English and mathematics by the time pupils leave the school have always been above or well above average. In 2001 the school received a School Achievement Award for improvement when the results in the national assessment tests in these subjects and science were in the top five per cent nationally. Due to the excellent teaching of the specialist music teacher, standards in music are now above average. Provision for information and communication technology has much improved recently with the addition of a computer suite so that standards in this subject are now at least in line with those nationally. Standards in design and technology are also better and in line with those expected nationally. Effective schemes of work have been developed for all subjects. Good and thorough procedures are now in place to assess pupils' learning in English, mathematics and

Attendance	Satisfactory.
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Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors and are eager to talk to them about their school life. They enjoy good relationships with each other.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teachers are enthusiastic, conscientious and hardworking. The quality of teaching observed varied from unsatisfactory to excellent. Most of the best teaching was observed in the reception class, in the class of the oldest pupils and in musical activities. The staff in the reception class have a clear understanding of the needs of young children and promote it well through a wide range of stimulating activities, so the children make good and sometimes very good progress in their learning.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics lessons is mostly good, and pupils learn effectively because areas for development, such as writing and opportunities for mathematical investigations, have been carefully identified and focused upon. Most lessons are planned with a clear focus on what pupils are going to learn and in the best lessons teachers use skilful questioning techniques to consolidate pupils' previous learning before introducing new facts and concepts. Although teachers' subject knowledge is usually good, there were some examples of teachers giving pupils wrong facts and confusing explanations. In the lessons where the quality of teaching is good or better, teachers show great enthusiasm, have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and lessons move at a brisk pace, promoting learning very successfully. Class discipline is usually good and most pupils listen attentively and respond well, which enhances and extends their learning. However, on the few occasions when teachers fail to manage pupils' behaviour well the pace of learning is slow. Most teachers use assessment information effectively to help plan future lessons. This means that tasks are, in general, matched well to pupils' needs and enable them to learn effectively. They also provide very well for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language; both groups are fully included in all activities. Marking is generally good. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to the pupils' education and are briefed well by teachers about what the pupils are learning and how they should make their input. Volunteers also provide good help for teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad, balanced and supported well by a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors who share their expertise with pupils. The school covers a range of extra-curricular themes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, enabling pupils to make at least good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good, pupils to make range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors who share their expertise with pupils. The school covers a range of extra-curricular themes.

The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and the good working partnership between the school and parents has a strong influence on the higher than average standards pupils achieve.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides effective leadership. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher and the hardworking staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very supportive, have a high level of expertise and take an active role in the management of the school. They fulfil their statutory requirements well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher, staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses the material resources, the accommodation and the strengths of the staff to the best effect in order to support pupils' learning.

The headteacher and the staff work together as an effective team. However, the role of the subject co-ordinator is not well developed so that teachers are not fully involved in supporting the management of the school in the aim of raising standards, especially in the rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Their children are making good progress and are expected to work hard. • The teaching is good. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons.

In general, the team agrees with the parents' positive comments. However, although good and very good teaching was observed in some classes, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, through lunchtime and after-school clubs, school visits and visitors who share their expertise with the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership and management of the school are good so that the entire school community is committed to raising standards.

1. The headteacher, who is supported well by the deputy headteacher and senior teachers, provides effective leadership and clear educational direction for the school. She leads a good team that has been carefully selected through the appointment processes to meet the needs of the school. Although there has been over the last two years a relatively high turnover of staff, the induction procedures are such that staff new to the school soon become part of the conscientious team. Within it there is a very good balance between the experienced teachers and those who are more recently qualified. Regardless of experience the teachers' shared enthusiasm and motivation and contribute significantly to the above average standards in English, mathematics and science, the pupils achieve by the time they leave the school, for which the school gained a School Achievement Award in 2001. The headteacher's decision to appoint a part-time specialist teacher to teach music to the whole school has been very successful, as it is clear that the pupils thoroughly enjoy their music making as well as attaining standards above those expected nationally. Also, the school has well-managed provision for pupils on the register of special educational needs. The individual needs of these pupils are carefully identified and well planned to ensure that they are catered for appropriately.
2. The school has a comprehensive development plan scheduling important areas for development over three years. This is a working document which drives the work of the school, and priorities are continually monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and governors. Some of the current initiatives have been very successful and are already contributing to improving standards; for example, the new computer suite.
3. The governors are very supportive, take an active role in the management of the school and fulfil their statutory requirements. They have diverse areas of expertise, which are used to good effect; for example, in the various committees, which carry out much of the preparatory work for the regular meetings of the governing body, increasing the efficiency of their management. The Chair of Governors and other governors visit on a regular basis and, in their role of subject link governors, they also monitor and make observations of lessons and report back to full governing body meetings.
4. The school monitors and evaluates its performance closely and, because the headteacher keeps them well informed, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They make good use of the detailed analysis of assessment results, and compare them with those in other schools both locally and nationally. The budget is operated according to the principles of best value, and careful tendering processes are employed for all major works. Governors are committed to developing the school and having a single age group in each class so they are currently considering an increase in the number of pupils and the building of a new classroom. They are also considering the benefits of a one- or two-term entry system for the reception children, rather than the three-term entry that exists now. The school has effective consultation practices; for example, last year it gave parents the opportunity to express their opinions about the school through a detailed questionnaire. Together with the headteacher and staff, governors have a commitment to providing the best

The school provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a caring environment, so that pupils develop good relationships with each other and the staff, good attitudes towards their work and good behaviour; this enables them to make good progress in their learning.

5. As at the last inspection, the school is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils develop good relationships with each other and the staff, good attitudes towards their work and good behaviour. This enables them to make good progress in their learning.
6. Spiritual awareness is developed very successfully through the daily act of collective worship and the curriculum in general. There is a strong Christian ethos which clearly reflects the school's aims. The school provides regular times for prayer and reflection. Pupils celebrate Christian festivals throughout the year, often at the church. The vicar, a regular visitor to the school, takes an assembly every week. Most pupils show great interest in the world around them and display sensitive attitudes to each other. For example, on the 'Friendship Wall' in one classroom, a pupil had written, 'I like my friend because she is kind and helpful'. Also, in classroom discussions most pupils listen carefully to each other, and express their thoughts and feelings confidently without fear of derision. The pupils are encouraged to share in each other's successes during the weekly certificates assembly. Well-planned activities often provide opportunities for the pupils to experience delight in their learning; for example, in a

other, but not, with special middle school level parents. They, go to school in the morning, in a morning.

6. The school provides a safe and secure environment for all pupils. The school is a caring and supportive environment for all pupils. The school provides a safe and secure environment for all pupils. The school is a caring and supportive environment for all pupils.

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9. Organised residential trips for the older pupils give them a greater social awareness. The

advance diary dates. The prospectus is very readable and the annual governors' report is another informative document. Formal parent/teacher consultations are very well attended and parents value the good informal access at other times. Parents receive well-written reports annually and they appreciate the work and effort the teachers give to writing them. There is always a good attendance at school performances, sports days and assemblies, and parents expressed how much they enjoy them.

15. Parents also value the Parent/Governors Link Forum. This group, which meets twice a term, is chaired by a governor and comprises the headteacher, a staff representative, the chair of the Parent Teacher Association and a parent representative from each class. Parental concerns and issues are raised and discussed, and it provides an opportunity to discuss proposed initiatives and school developments. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning is good. Last year parents were given the opportunity to express their views through a questionnaire/survey and as a result of this the school has undertaken a whole-school review of behaviour management and drawn up a Code of Conduct. Parents have given very positive feedback about this.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The role of the subject co-ordinator so that teachers are fully involved in supporting the management of the school, especially in the rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching so that all teaching is raised to the level of the best.

16. All the adults in the school have worked very hard to improve standards in English, mathematics and science as well as other subjects. For example, the computer suite has had a very great impact on standards and progress in information and communication technology throughout the school. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented effectively, and subject policies and schemes of work have been improved and developed. With the high priority recently on improving standards in English and mathematics, the co-ordinators of these subjects with the headteacher and outside agencies, have had the opportunity to monitor teaching and its impact on learning and standards, through direct classroom observations. They have also used other monitoring strategies such as a scrutiny of pupils' work and an analysis of planning and performance data. As a result, the quality of teaching in these subjects in most classes is often good or better. Although co-ordinators are developing portfolios and have action plans for improvements in their subjects, not many have clear objectives for raising standards. They monitor the pupils' progress and learning to some extent through informal procedures such as scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work, but their role in directly observing the way the pupils are taught is underdeveloped. The school has identified the need to develop the co-ordinators' role to assess standards pupils are attaining, the scrutiny of teachers' planning and, through the monitoring of the quality of teaching, the impact it has on pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

17. In order to build on the current improvement of the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should take the following action:
 - (a) Develop the role of the subject co-ordinator so that teachers are fully involved in supporting the management of the school, especially in the rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching so that all teaching is raised to the level of the best. (Paragraph 16)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

17

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

9

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	2	7	6	1	0	0
Percentage	6	12	41	35	6	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

168

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

3

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

21

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	162
Number of questionnaires returned	91
Percentage of questionnaires returned	56

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	44	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	50	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	72	11	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	61	12	2	0
The teaching is good.	55	42	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	50	3	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	41	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	37	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	9	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	29	51	14	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	60	0	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	54	19	1	4