



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Sinfin Primary School

City of Derby Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 21-22 June 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Sinfin Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Miss J Lloyd-Williams
Address of school:	Sheridan Street Sinfin Derby DE24 9HG
Telephone:	01332 760071
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, at the above address
Chair of governors:	Mr J Brittain
Local education authority area:	City of Derby
Unique reference number:	112734
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr J S Hardwick HMI
Dates of inspection:	21-22 June 2004

Introduction

1. Sinfin Primary School serves an area of local authority housing to the south of Derby city centre. The number on roll fell by about a third between 1999 and 2001, since when it has steadied. Currently there are 137 full-time pupils, and 37 part-time pupils in the nursery. The pupils' attainment on entry to the nursery is mostly well below the average for their age. About half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is more than twice the national average and reflects low incomes in the area. A relatively high proportion of pupils move in and out of the school during the course of the year, causing disruption to their learning. Forty four pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, including two who have a Statement of Special Educational Need; many of these pupils have behavioural difficulties. There are 48 pupils from ethnic minority background, 24 of whom speak English as an additional language.

2. The school is scheduled to move into a new building in 2005, with funding provided through the private finance initiative.

3. When Sinfin Primary School was inspected in September 2000, as part of the national programme of inspections, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) visited the school in December 2001 and found that too little progress had been made. The school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

4. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of December 2001. The school was visited by HMI on six occasions to monitor the progress being made.

5. In June 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of December 2001.

Main findings

6. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- in the last three years there has been a significant rise in standards, but this has been inconsistent across the school. However, improvements to the teaching have meant that the pupils have recently made satisfactory, and often good, progress;
 - the standards for most pupils are at or just below the level expected for their age. The school's overall scores in national tests improved considerably in 2003. Although below or well below the national figures, the results compared favourably with those of similar schools;
 - the school makes satisfactory overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies are well-conducted occasions
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that engender a sense of community, and there is a good range of extracurricular activities. As the school recognises, the multicultural dimension of work and opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility are underdeveloped;

- improving the pupils' attitudes and behaviour has been a critical area for the school and gains have been hard won. While they are satisfactory overall, there is still considerable variation from class to class. Where their education has been settled, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, but in other classes some pupils are easily distracted and need close supervision from adults;
- attendance has risen in the last three years from just over 90 per cent to 94 per cent for the current year to date, which is similar to the national figure;
- the quality of teaching was good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. This is a considerable improvement from the position in 2001, when more than a third of the teaching was unsatisfactory or poor;
- the curriculum meets national requirements, and proper emphasis is given to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy;
- the school has introduced a thorough system for tracking the pupils' progress and taking action accordingly;
- the headteacher has provided very good leadership and management, showing determination and energy to take the school forward in the face of considerable difficulties. With the recent appointment of a fully permanent staff, including a deputy headteacher, she is now well supported by a senior team whose members share the responsibilities for determining the school's priorities and monitoring its progress;
- the school's future has been assured, with a new building scheduled for completion in 2005, and there is a well-judged school improvement plan;
- for too long the governors have been overdependent on the headteacher and external monitoring for checking the school's performance. However, they have strengthened their role in the past two terms, taken a higher profile in the school's affairs and fulfilled their responsibilities.

Key issues

7. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards, maintaining the focus on basic skills;
 - continue to improve the pupils' attitudes and behaviour;
 - continue to improve the quality of teaching;
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- afford more opportunities for the pupils to exercise responsibility;
 - plan the move to the new building carefully, ensuring that the drive to improve the pupils' education remains the priority.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

8. In the last three years there has been a significant rise in standards, but this has been inconsistent across the school. When the pupils have benefited from regular, effective teaching they have made good progress and demonstrated their capability. At times, their progress has been slight, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5. However, improvements to the teaching have meant that the pupils have recently made satisfactory, and often good, progress. The standards for most pupils are at or just below the level expected for their age. Very few pupils reach higher levels and a significant minority is working at well below the expected level.

9. Since 2000, the school's results in national tests have been below or well below the national figures, but, overall, they improved considerably in 2003, especially at Key Stage 2, where the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 was around double that of the previous year.

10. When set against the results of similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the school performed well in 2003. At Key Stage 1, the results were similar to the average in reading and writing, and well above average in mathematics. At Key Stage 2 the results were average in mathematics and well above average in English and science. Around a fifth of the Key Stage 2 pupils reached the higher Level 5.

11. The initial results in the 2004 national tests for Key Stage 1 point to a further rise in standards over the previous year, with all the pupils reaching Level 2, the standard expected for the age group, and significant proportions achieving beyond the basic level. However, based on assessments in March 2004, the results at Key Stage 2 are expected to be poorer than in 2003, as a result of weak teaching and disruption to the pupils' learning in previous years. This picture was reflected in lessons, where standards were relatively higher at the end of Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2.

12. The pupils' language development is generally below average when they enter the nursery, but most of the youngest pupils are well placed to achieve the nationally set Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Key Stage 1. The older pupils in the nursery are able to write their names, and all identify their name-card as part of the procedures for registration. The pupils recognise colours, count objects to ten and move through computer programs by clicking on symbols. They know the names of sea creatures, studied as part of a topic, thread nuts and bolts, and pour water and sand into small containers with little spillage.

13. The Year 2 pupils use well-rehearsed strategies to help with their reading. They recognise a good range of words on sight, are usually successful in spelling out the sounds that letters make and refer to the pictures in books for clues. They read accurately, carefully and with understanding, and the more accomplished readers appreciate the humour in stories and predict what is likely to happen. Most of the pupils in Year 6 have learned to enjoy books and show preferences for particular authors. They understand what they read and

pause for punctuation to bring out the meaning in a passage. However, only the more able read with lively intonation and use inference to determine the nature of characters and what the author implies rather than states.

14. The pupils at the end of both key stages write for a good range of purposes, and with tidy, joined handwriting. In Year 2, spelling and punctuation are sound, with most pupils using full stops and capital letters and the high attainers employing speech marks and, occasionally, apostrophes. Attainment in Year 6 is more varied, with only the higher attainers working securely at the expected level. Some of the spelling of the lower attainers is phonetic rather than correct, but all use a sound range of punctuation marks, including those for speech when they use dialogue to take forward a storyline. The pupils select words for precision and variety and they use extended sentences, when these aspects of writing are the focus for the work. However, at other times they often revert to simpler words and structures.

15. Standards in mathematics are generally higher than those in English, and the pupils learn to set their working out neatly and methodically. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have sound recall of number facts, such as the multiplication tables for two and five, and they use this knowledge to derive new facts. They also check their answers, for instance by counting on number lines. The pupils calculate accurately, including simple division, measure length to the nearest centimetre, represent data on a bar chart and know some equivalent fractions. The Year 6 pupils recall number facts at a reasonable speed, using them in calculations such as giving the size of angles that are multiples of 90 degrees. They recognise which operations are needed to solve simple problems phrased in words, and are accurate in their working. Similarly, they are able to give straightforward percentages of whole numbers, work out the areas and perimeters of rectangles, and measure and name different angles.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The school makes satisfactory overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies are well-conducted religious occasions that involve the pupils in considering moral issues, exemplify the school's expectations and promote a sense of community. The pupils listen well and offer thoughtful answers, drawing on their own experiences.

17. There is a good range of extracurricular activities, including sports clubs, recorders and a choir. The oldest pupils also attend Derby County's study support centre. The pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to join a residential stay and visits are made in the locality, for instance to a farm and a supermarket. The oldest pupils have also visited a mosque. Festivals from different religions are featured in assembly, but, as the school recognises, multicultural work has been underdeveloped since the priority has been to work on pupils' basic skills.

18. A school council meets each fortnight and representatives also join the headteacher to contribute to a neighbourhood panel. There are also a few opportunities for the pupils to take school-wide responsibility, for example over playground equipment. This is an aspect of provision that could be extended to the pupils' benefit.

19. Improving the pupils' attitudes and behaviour has been a critical area for the school over the last three years. They are satisfactory overall, but gains have been hard won and there is still a considerable variation across the school. In those classes that have received settled and effective teaching, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. However in other

classes, particularly in Year 5, the pupils are sometimes restless, easily distracted, and need close supervision in order to complete their work in a satisfactory fashion. Throughout the school there are individual pupils with particular difficulties whose behaviour can be challenging, but these pupils come to the fore much less frequently than in the past. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are a considerable improvement when compared with the picture in 2001, as reflected in the decreasing need to use exclusions as a sanction. In the term before the school became subject to special measures there were 29 exclusions; there have been none in the last two terms. The introduction and consistent application of a carefully structured system of sanctions and rewards have been important factors in the gains that have been made. The pupils know what is expected and what the consequences of misconduct will be; they also value the certificates and mentions in assembly that arise from good effort and behaviour.

20. The pupils also receive awards for good attendance, an area in which the school has worked particularly hard. The learning mentor and a classroom assistant, for example, visit the homes of pupils whose absence is unexplained and the notice-boards for parents outside each class give prominence to the latest figures and targets. The school's efforts have met with considerable success. Overall attendance has risen from just over 90 per cent to 93 per cent for the school year 2002-3, and to 94 per cent, similar to the national figure, for the current year to date.

The quality of education

21. The quality of teaching was good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and satisfactory in Key Stage 2: overall, it was good in eight lessons and satisfactory in six. This is a considerable improvement from the position in 2001, when more than a third of the teaching was unsatisfactory or poor.

22. All the lessons were well planned. The planning was detailed, and based on appropriate learning objectives that were shared with the pupils at the outset and often referred to later in order to re-emphasise the purpose of the work. The preparation of materials was a particular strength throughout; the teachers had worked hard to provide interesting practical tasks at different levels and suitable means for the pupils to record their findings. The teachers made good use of strategies and equipment, such as paired discussion and individual whiteboards, to make sure that all pupils contributed when the class was being taught as a whole, although there were occasions when the pupils sat for too long on the carpet. However, one of the distinguishing features of the better lessons was the way the teacher varied the demand at this point to offer a greater challenge to the higher-attaining or older pupils. The pace of learning was satisfactory overall, but better maintained in the good lessons, particularly in the central section when pupils were expected to work with a degree of independence. The additional adults in classes were clear about what the pupils were to learn and especially effective in helping groups. However, the teachers' expectations of how well the pupils applied themselves to their group tasks were sometimes too low.

23. The programme of work in the nursery is well planned according to the nationally set areas of learning, and the younger pupils from the reception class also join the nursery for some of the time to benefit from its additional facilities. As in the main school, the activities are well prepared and purposeful, and the adults give due emphasis to the need to improve the pupils' basic skills, particularly in speaking.

24. The curriculum is carefully planned from national guidelines and meets requirements. The lessons in literacy and numeracy are strengths of the school and have been at the heart of the drive to raise standards.

25. The school has introduced a thorough system for assessing the pupils' levels of attainment in English and mathematics and for tracking their progress. Tests and exercises are used five times per year to gauge how well the pupils are faring, and the results are used to decide the groupings in class, the appropriate level of work and where additional help is needed. This information also forms the basis for targets for individual pupils and for groups within each class. However, the approach to setting targets varies from class to class and the value to the pupils themselves is inconsistent because the system is not standardised and the National Curriculum level is not shared.

Leadership and management

26. The headteacher joined the school shortly after it became subject to special measures at the end of 2001. She has provided very good leadership and management, showing determination and energy to take the school forward in the face of considerable difficulties, particularly over staffing.

27. The governance of the school formed one of the key issues in the inspection of 2001. The governing body has been strengthened and individual governors are in closer contact with the school, but for too long the governors remained dependent on others to monitor the school's performance and many of the initiatives related to their roles have stemmed from the headteacher. However, attendance at meetings has risen and visits to school have increased. The governors are following well-judged schedules for their work: they fulfil their responsibilities.

28. Until recently, the headteacher shouldered most of the burden of leadership and management. However, she was well supported by an acting deputy headteacher who set a good example in her own teaching and took responsibility for some important aspects of work, such as pupils' behaviour and mathematics. Appointments for January 2004 allowed the school to establish a permanent management structure, for the first time for several years, and the team meets regularly and follows an appropriate agenda related to the school's strategic direction. Responsibilities are now shared evenly and appropriately and the co-ordinators are beginning to adopt a higher profile in the leadership of subjects, though this role is underdeveloped.

29. The headteacher, when she arrived, was quick to recognise the school's priorities and these formed the basis of a detailed school improvement plan that complemented work that had been undertaken on the school's key issues. The improvement plan has been followed closely, keeping the school on course during a period when staffing has been unstable. There has been the need to employ many teachers on a short-term basis. Some found difficulty in meeting the challenges the school presents, and some of the permanent teachers were inexperienced. The latter have profited from training and from the headteacher's support and they have grown in confidence. Detailed checks have been made on the school's progress against the improvement plan, especially over the quality of teaching and the effects on pupils' standards. Where necessary, adjustments have been made to practice and the staff have worked as a team, for example when observing each other teach and commenting on lessons. The school operates much more consistently than previously

from class to class; for instance over expectations about behaviour and the presentation of work, daily routines, curriculum planning and care over the school's appearance. Much effort has gone into mounting attractive displays that mask the poor accommodation that the building offers.

30. The local education authority (LEA) has provided satisfactory support to the school. It was particularly helpful in settling the school's future, which was uncertain in 2001, enabling a permanent appointment to be made to the headship. The consultants for literacy and numeracy have given training and advice, reinforcing the efforts of the headteacher, and regular case conferences have been held to review the school's progress and agree on different courses of action. The LEA's work on improving governance has been slow to make the necessary impact.

Implementation of the action plan

31. The inspection report of December 2001 required the school to address six key issues. These related to: determining the school's future and establishing long-term plans; securing effective permanent leadership and management; raising standards, especially in literacy and numeracy; improving the quality of teaching; improving pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance; and ensuring that governors fulfil their responsibility. Good progress has been made in respect of the school's future, the leadership and management, the quality of teaching, and attendance. Reasonable progress has been made elsewhere.

32. The school's future has been assured, with a new building scheduled for completion in 2005, and there is a well-judged school improvement plan. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management, supported by a newly established senior team.

33. Pupils' standards of achievement have risen steadily but inconsistently, a pattern that has been reflected in the improvements to the quality of teaching. However, the teachers are now permanent and have worked hard on the training they have received and the comments from observations of their lessons. This has resulted in progress for the pupils that is satisfactory and often good, and the school's performance in the 2003 national tests was strong when compared with that of similar schools.

34. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have varied considerably from class to class according to the quality of teaching. Nonetheless they have improved overall in response to higher demands in lessons, to a consistent approach to rewards and sanctions, to efforts to work with parents and the community, and to a greater range of extracurricular activities. Work to improve attendance, especially that undertaken by the learning mentor, has proved particularly successful.

35. The governors have received training and they take a greater part in the school's affairs, for instance over meeting with co-ordinators. However, they have been slow to establish their key part in monitoring the school's performance and, until recently, they have been over-reliant on the headteacher for setting down some of the details about their roles. Nonetheless they now follow appropriate schedules for their work and fulfil their responsibilities.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected by HMI in December 2001 having previously been designated as having serious weaknesses in September 2000. The inspection was carried out under the School Inspections Act 1996, section 3, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in June and November 2002, in April, July and November 2003, and in February 2004 to assess the progress it was making to address the key issues in the report of December 2001.

In June 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days to check the progress being made. The inspection was carried out under the School Inspections Act, section 3; it was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Fourteen parts of lessons and an assembly were inspected, and pupils' conduct was observed around the school and at playtime. A sample of pupils in Years 2 and 6 were heard reading and their work over the year was examined. A range of documentation was scrutinised. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the co-ordinator for numeracy and special educational needs. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of December 2001 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.