



Southdown Community Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109005
LEA Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number 278098
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005
Reporting inspector Ian Hodgkinson RISP

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Mount Road
School category	Community		Southdown
Age range of pupils	3 to 7		Bath BA2 1LG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01225 424950
Number on roll	190	Fax number	01225 310051
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr S Pearson
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sue Adams

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors.

Description of the school

Situated on the southern edge of Bath, the school draws children from communities where levels of social deprivation are high. Children of a range of capabilities join the school, although over a third have learning difficulties or disabilities, a high proportion of which are speech and communication disorders. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is twice the national average. There are few for whom English is an additional language.

The school offers both Nursery and Reception classes for children of pre-school age (the Foundation Stage) and mixed age classes in Years 1 and 2. Numbers on roll have fallen considerably, partly because of a fall in the number of children locally. This necessitated a large restructuring of the school, including 11 staff redundancies, in the summer 2005, following the arrival of the new headteacher.

The school manages the Rainbows Nursery on its site, which offers all day and sessional childcare. This was subject to an inspection by Ofsted earlier this year, when provision was judged to be good.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. This is the school's evaluation of its effectiveness, and inspectors agree with it. Although costs per pupils are high, the school offers satisfactory value for money, given the successes of its restructuring programme. Throughout the school, pupils who attend regularly achieve well. However, attendance and punctuality are poor, and the school has not given a sufficiently high priority to improving this. The quality of care, guidance and support provided is, however, satisfactory overall. The school works particularly well with a number of outside agencies to give children and their families access to extra help when it is needed.

Having joined the school with capabilities which are well below average, most pupils make strong progress in their basic skills. A very well-planned curriculum is taught well. Teachers know their pupils well, and design work which is well suited to their needs. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They enjoy their activities and develop good skills for working with others. They do, however, need to learn to take more responsibilities and have more of a say in the way the school operates. Pupils' behaviour is now satisfactory as a result of a strong focus on improving the management of behaviour across the school.

The school is led and managed satisfactorily. The new headteacher provides good leadership. She has carried through an extensive restructuring with a good deal of success. Self-evaluation and improvement planning has been sound. The school has made particularly good progress in raising standards since the last inspection, and is well placed to improve further. Governance is satisfactory. Governors, however, need to review school policies more systematically to meet statutory requirements and to help improve their understanding of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attendance and punctuality of pupils so that all achieve as well as they can.
- Give pupils more opportunities to take on responsibilities and to help make decisions about how the school is run.
- Ensure that school policies are systematically reviewed by governors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The skills of the children who join the school in the Nursery are generally well below average. A significant number of children have particular weaknesses in communicating, both through speaking and writing. By the time they leave the Reception class, their knowledge and skills are below average. However, they make good progress through the Foundation Stage, especially in basic literacy and number skills and in learning to work and play with others.

When pupils take their national tests at the end of Year 2, their results are in line with national averages overall. In mathematics, results are above average. These results represent good progress. Given their starting points, pupils' achievement is good. The school sets appropriate and challenging targets for pupils' test results in reading, writing and mathematics. Most meet or exceed their targets, including those who are more able and those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The progress of a minority of pupils is, however, limited by poor attendance. Pupils make satisfactory progress in other subjects of the National Curriculum. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being is satisfactory overall. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Social skills in particular are nurtured from the moment children enter the school. Routines are quickly established in the Nursery and Reception classes, so that a calm and industrious working atmosphere is created. Throughout the school, pupils clearly enjoy their activities. They do not, however, take on many responsibilities. Nor do they have enough of a say about how their school is run.

Much attention has been given recently to securing good behaviour, particularly in response to the highly challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils. It is to the school's credit that these measures are beginning to take effect and satisfactory behaviour has been secured across the school. Consistently-applied strategies mean that pupils are now able to enjoy their lessons without interruption. Behaviour in the playground can be very boisterous. However, even the youngest children are quick to demonstrate that they feel safe and secure. Pupils eat healthily at lunchtimes, and have regular opportunities for physical activity, which many relish.

Attendance is well below average and has fallen considerably over the last four years. Lateness to school by a sizeable minority of pupils causes some disruption to the start of lessons.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are well taught. There is a very strong emphasis on giving pupils the basic skills essential to their future education. In all classes, teachers are adept at developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills in every lesson. Planning is thorough and precise, and assessments give a good picture of pupils' progress. Pupils are regularly given very clear individual targets specifying how to improve their work in reading, writing and mathematics. In this way, teachers ensure that work challenges pupils of all abilities to do better. Activities are also interesting. The new behaviour policy is

being applied consistently and effectively. All these factors come together to create productive, purposeful learning.

Teaching is often lively in the Nursery and Reception classes, which engages the attention of even those who are easily restless or upset. Gentle and sensitive encouragement during discussion enables the more timid children to take part and there are plenty of opportunities for children to talk with each other and share ideas. Facilities for outdoor education are adequate, as are strategies for developing independence, although the school recognises that these aspects of the Foundation Stage provision need further development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a well-balanced curriculum. It is very well planned to develop successfully pupils' basic literacy and number skills through themes which are of direct interest or relevance to pupils. In Years 1 and 2, this promotes strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics while allowing pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding in other National Curriculum subjects. Similarly, at the Foundation Stage, work and play activities develop basic skills while stimulating real enjoyment in learning and skills of working with others. Pupils learn to use computers well to help them improve their learning. Much good work is done to stimulate pupils' creativity, and pupils' work is celebrated in lively displays. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are well-supported to gain access to the curriculum. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is available in sport and music. The school council, through which pupils might express their views, has not operated recently, although there are plans to reinstate this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral and educational care, guidance and support are satisfactory, with some very particular strengths. Extensive links with outside agencies allow the school to give its vulnerable pupils, and families experiencing problems, a good range of help. Those pupils with high levels of emotional and behavioural need are well supported. Sensitive, but decisive, strategies are helping these pupils make good progress in adapting to the responsibilities of living and working with others. Educational guidance and support are good. Pupils' individual targets for improvement are regularly reviewed and shared with parents.

Security arrangements around the school have been tightened. Other arrangements for ensuring pupils are safe are satisfactory, and have improved recently with the introduction of systems for recording accidents and incidents. Staff know pupils well. Children know they have someone to turn to if they are hurt or troubled. Pupils who miss out on learning because they are not at school enough are not as well supported as they are in other areas of pastoral care. New procedures for following up individual instances of persistent absence and late arrival at school have led to some small improvements in attendance and punctuality. However, firm expectations have not

been established to discourage the many holidays taken during term time. Neither are there fully-fledged systems for following up unexplained absence on the first day it occurs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good achievement and good standards of teaching have been secured, but there are some shortcomings in the management of pupils' attendance and in some aspects of governance.

The school is given good direction by its new headteacher, who has been very successful in restructuring the school in response to falling rolls and a substantial budget deficit. This has been achieved while retaining a clear focus on maintaining standards and the quality of provision. The school is therefore well placed to improve further. Its self-evaluation is satisfactory. It has evaluated its strengths and weaknesses to arrive at some important development priorities, and in doing so it has consulted staff and parents appropriately. Improving standards of behaviour has been a key priority, and procedures being put in place are having success. The need to improve attendance has not, however, been given a high enough profile. Whilst the school has now developed good systems for tracking the academic progress of pupils, there is a need to strengthen the collection of data to monitor other aspects of the school's performance, including attendance.

The governing body is reviewing its procedures to allow it to keep a closer check on the school's performance. Systems are now in place to allow the school to recover from a substantial budget deficit, and to avoid the school slipping into similar financial difficulties in future. Governance is therefore satisfactory overall, but the review of policies, especially those related to the curriculum, has not been sufficiently systematic and rigorous. The policy on sex education and relationships has not been discussed and approved by governors, and parents notified, as required.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	No
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	No
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Southdown Community Infant School Mount Road Southdown Bath BA2 1LG

7 October 2005

Dear Children

Thank you very much for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and looking at your work. Your song to us in Assembly made us feel very welcome. We know how much you like your school, because you and your parents told us. These are some of the things we liked best:

We were very pleased to see how much you learn when you are at school.

Children in your school do really well in your tests in reading, writing and maths by the end of Year 2. Your school's results are as good as they are for children in most schools.

Your teachers make work interesting, and they show you clearly what you need to do to get better.

We know that there have been a lot of changes in the school, but we think that they have turned out well.

There are some ways in which the school can get even better:

Everyone needs to make a big effort to make sure that children don't take too much time off school. If you are not at school, you cannot learn.

Everyone needs to get to school on time, so that lessons can make a good start.

We would like your teachers to ask you more about how the school is run.

We have asked the governors to keep checking that the school is doing the right things.

Once again, thank you for helping us during the inspection. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson (Lead inspector)