



St Monica Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116106
LEA Southampton LEA
Inspection number 279752
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector David Benstock AI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Bay Road
School category	Community		Sholing
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Southampton SO19 8EZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380399870
Number on roll	258	Fax number	02380499010
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Dawn Marshall
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Chris Frith-Rogers

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 7	14 June 2006 - 15 June 2006	279752

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Monica is a three-form entry community infant school on the outskirts of Southampton and admits pupils 4 - 7 years of age from the immediate locality. The school is larger than similar infant schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low and the percentage whose first language is not English is below average. The social and economic background of families is wide-ranging but overall broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average and none currently have statements. The school has received a Basic Skills Quality Mark for its work in literacy and numeracy, has 'Investors in People' status and a 'Healthy Schools' Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory standard of education and has some good features. The school judges its effectiveness from past performance as inadequate but there have been significant improvements in standards over the past year.

Achievement is now satisfactory in all three core aspects as a result of the teaching, which is mainly satisfactory and increasingly good. The quality of provision and achievement in the Foundation Stage are good under new leadership, resulting in basic learning skills that are developing well. Personal development of all pupils is good as a result of the good level of care. Opportunities for spiritual awareness, an issue at the last inspection, have improved but need to be more frequent. Multicultural understanding also needs more emphasis. Most pupils' behaviour is good in school but a small minority lack concentration in class when teaching is insufficiently dynamic.

Although curriculum provision is broadly the same as that found in other similar schools, enrichment opportunities and Reception provision are good. The headteacher and her deputy, with intensive help from the local authority, have worked hard to secure improvement especially in the quality of teaching. Subject leaders are supportive and committed to raising standards although there is still some inconsistency in their monitoring of teaching to ensure that teachers use assessment well enough to improve learning. As yet the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils is insufficient.

There is a strong commitment to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. There is effective management of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Governors provide good support, monitor improvement and hold the school accountable and are becoming more involved in strategic planning. Good financial controls are in place and with broadly average costs the school now gives satisfactory value for money. With the proven effectiveness in securing improvement in the last year there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of pupils especially those with higher ability by using assessment more consistently and ensuring challenge and expectations in teaching meet the needs of all pupils.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to focus more rigorously on raising standards through monitoring of teaching and use of performance data.
- Give more opportunities for spiritual awareness and multicultural understanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Most pupils are achieving satisfactorily as they move through the school reaching broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 1.

Children enter Reception classes with varied knowledge and skills based on their age and previous experiences. On the whole, their knowledge and skills are broadly in line with those expected of their age. The good teaching in Reception classes enables children, many of whom start midway through the year, to make good progress in all areas of learning and personal development. By the time they enter Year 1 standards are broadly similar to most schools.

In 2005, the standards by the end of Year 2 were below average in reading, writing and in mathematics, and progress was inadequate as identified in the school self-evaluation. Pupils attaining higher levels were well below in all the three areas but especially in reading. Targets were challenging but not met. Results had been consistently below average for a few years and pupils had not achieved as well as they should. Improvement was being made in writing, and standards in mathematics were being maintained but results in reading were declining.

The underachievement was attributed to weaknesses in teaching. Current assessments show that the standards have improved and achievement is satisfactory. The school has put in a lot of effort to improve reading, writing and mathematics in higher levels but has further to go. Boys' results were below that of girls but this difference is being reduced. Parents write to say they are very pleased with the progress that pupils are currently making with their basic skills.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and they make progress in line with others towards their targets. The few pupils with English as a second language also make progress similar to others of similar ability.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The quality of pupils' personal development and well-being is good which is better than the school's own self-evaluation. Behaviour is good around school and makes a significant contribution to the harmonious atmosphere. However, there are a few occasions when pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not concentrate well enough in classes where teaching lacks appropriate challenge. Pupils enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and attitudes to learning of the majority are good. Pupils particularly like the friendliness of the school and activities out of school hours and many pupils say they like mathematics.

Pupils understand the benefits of healthy eating and lifestyle. Sporting activities such as the football club are particularly popular. Pupils understand what constitutes a healthy diet. They feel safe in school, knowing there is an adult to tell if there are problems. The 'gate buddies' from Year 2 provide additional support for enhancing younger children's confidence. Pupils develop the basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and also skills of teamwork and sharing of ideas to support their transition to the next stage of education.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. They have very clear understanding of what is right and wrong and generally show respect for each other. Relationships with teachers are good. There is some but not enough

opportunity to reflect spiritually on values and beliefs of others. Pupils gain a satisfactory understanding of cultures and lifestyles other than their own in the range of books available but this aspect of personal development is less well developed than in many schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory reflecting the current improvement since these were judged in the school's self-evaluation as inadequate. Good teaching was observed in Reception. Assessment is beginning to be used to support learning across the school. However, not all teachers use assessment consistently. Pupils contribute, for example by using the thumbs up or down signal, very responsibly. The school has a wealth of detailed assessment information but it is not being used consistently to improve learning.

Most teachers plan lessons well and use a variety of approaches and resources to ensure that all pupils enjoy their lessons. In the most successful lessons pace and challenge are good and learners concentrate well. Work in Reception classes is particularly well matched to the needs of young children. However, teachers are not consistently planning work that meets the needs of the range of pupils in the class, particularly the higher attaining pupils. Teachers have implemented good strategies for managing behaviour and learning and this is now having a clear impact on the progress made by the majority of children. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well. Group and paired work is giving pupils the opportunity to learn independently. However, in some lessons time is not used well enough when they are not working with an adult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall, curriculum provision is good and meets the needs of most pupils well. There are developing strengths in Foundation Stage provision. There is also a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities throughout the school. The school has a clear focus on the development of skills in literacy and numeracy and good opportunities are found to develop reading, writing and number work in all subjects of the curriculum. Displays illustrate the effective and varied approaches to work in science, history and art. The curriculum in Reception is very well planned and indoor and outdoor play areas are used particularly well. Many pupils are members of the choir and others regularly attend environment, ICT, sport and language clubs. Well-planned visits, for example to a farm, station and garden centre, make a major contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning and to developing social and other skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and pupils benefit from learning in a safe and attractive environment. Reception classes are very well cared for and the new library and the ICT suite are used well to support pupils in their learning. Year 2 pupils are confident about moving to junior school because they have joint lessons and several visits.

Health and safety procedures and child protection are fully in place and the monitoring of behaviour and attendance is good. Parents are particularly pleased about the quality of care for individual pupils, for example those with allergies. Trips and visits are managed well and pupils help in this because they write guidance leaflets for adults helpers during literacy lessons. Systems for monitoring progress are improving and targets, that pupils can understand and achieve, are helping to improve progress. The quality of support from many adults, including parents, teaching assistants in class and around school is good. Pupils also have responsibilities as 'buddies' to help others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, have a good understanding of the strengths and aspects that need to be addressed to bring about further improvement. They have a clear sense of purpose to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school has a commitment to make sure all pupils have equality of opportunity, although the needs of higher attaining pupils have not been fully met.

Governors provide good support and challenge, and are beginning to be more proactive in strategic planning. They have a good understanding of the school, using an effective committee structure to monitor issues, and most visit on a regular basis. Statutory requirements are met. Finances are well managed.

Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and the leadership team are very focused on addressing the underachievement having appreciated the urgency needed. Teachers' work is now thoroughly evaluated, strengths and weaknesses identified and support provided. Monitoring by some subject coordinators is undertaken but needs to be more comprehensive and rigorous. There is increasing use of performance data to track pupils' progress and achievement, set targets for improvement and identify areas for curriculum change.

Good links are developing with other schools to expand the opportunity to share ideas and good practice. The partnership with parents is very good and this is demonstrated by the high proportion of positive responses to surveys of parental opinion.

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	2	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	2	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	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
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

Children

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and meeting your teachers. We think St Monica gives you a satisfactory education but it also has some good features.

This is what we liked about your school: * You obviously enjoy school and work hard to improve how well you do in tests. * Most of you behave well, share ideas, help and work well with each other. * The teachers are caring and give you a great deal of support if you have problems. * The work done in the Reception classes is particularly good. * The governors, headteacher and staff are working hard to make the school better and improve your achievement. * Your parents are very pleased with the school and frequently help with events.

For your school to be better, we have asked your teachers to give you work that will help you to all to achieve as well as you can, to expect more from those who are more able, to use assessments better to help you learn or tell you more about how to improve your work and to give you more opportunities to reflect spiritually on the needs of others and understand more about the different cultures in the world. We hope you continue to enjoy and do well in your time at the school.

Yours sincerely,

David Benstock

Lead Inspector