

Summerhill Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108966
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	288233
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Hitchings
Headteacher	Alison Laing
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002
School address	Cloud's Hill Road St George Bristol BS5 7LE
Telephone number	0117 9030243
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Summerhill Infant School is an average-sized school on the outskirts of the city centre. In common with a local trend, the numbers of pupils attending the school have fallen. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased, including the few pupils learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, but proportions vary across year groups. These changing factors have influenced the attainment on entry to Reception, which is now well below expectations in key aspects of language, literacy and mathematical development.

There have been significant changes in staffing over the past four years, including senior members, but this has now stabilised. The current headteacher is leaving the school at the end of this term and a new headteacher has been appointed to start in September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Summerhill Infant School is satisfactory, and it has some good features. Strengths in pastoral care and the school's 'community' spirit contribute much to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Written comments from parents show how much they appreciate the commitment and friendliness of staff and the degree to which staff nurture pupils' self-esteem. The outcome can be seen in happy, outgoing pupils who enjoy their lessons and behave well. Attendance has improved, and now matches the national average. Academic achievement is satisfactory. Good provision in Reception is marked by stimulating and purposeful activities so that children progress well. Thereafter, progress is satisfactory. The many changes to staffing over the past few years have hindered the rate of improvement but, more recently, things have steadied. The introduction of some very structured learning programmes ensures that the school's satisfactory curriculum focuses closely on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. These new initiatives have gained some success so that, while standards are below average overall, particularly in reading and writing, national test results for the present Year 2 have greater proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics than last year. Nevertheless, the school recognises that pupils need a broader range of reading and writing experiences than they currently have, in order to generate more rapid progress in both these subjects. Steps have already been taken to address this issue and the school is aware that it now needs to adjust its provision further.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and many lessons are taught well. Care, guidance and support are also satisfactory. Improvements to assessment mean that staff members now have a much clearer knowledge of pupils' attainment. However, this information is not yet used as effectively as it should be to modify work sufficiently to pupils' needs. Consequently, lesson activities do not always challenge pupils enough to achieve their best, including the more able.

An honest appraisal of its performance and the hard work of its enthusiastic team of staff are two significant features of the school's satisfactory leadership and management. The school is determined to secure improvement, knows where it needs to go and demonstrates satisfactory capacity for further development in the gradual success of its recent actions. The governing body has taken a strong lead in the appointment of the new headteacher and key governors have a clear understanding of where future improvements need to be made.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils experience a broad range of experiences in reading and writing in order to accelerate achievement in both these subjects.
- Use assessment information with more precision when planning lesson activities so that pupils are consistently challenged to do their very best, including the more able.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory, including for those pupils with learning difficulties or who are learning to speak English as an additional language. Children move on at a good pace in

Reception. Standards are below expectations when they enter Year 1, and this level of attainment represents good progress given that their attainment is well below expected levels in crucial areas of language, literacy and mathematical development when they first start school.

Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Standards in the current Year 2 are below average as a whole, reflecting the national test results of the previous two years. Nevertheless, these most recent results illustrate the increasing effectiveness of the school's initiatives, as this group has a greater proportion of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language and more challenging learning difficulties than last year's group. In addition, more pupils gained the higher Level 3 this year in writing, and also in mathematics where standards are broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly illustrated in happy, confident and friendly pupils. These qualities are evident from Reception onwards, and similarly so among those pupils from other countries. At the start of the day, pupils settle down sensibly to routines and make a calm, well ordered entry to assembly. They talk about special times, moments of sadness and identify good things about their friends. Pupils also have a well developed knowledge of cultures and faiths other than their own. In lessons, pupils are attentive and interested and, when given the opportunity, willingly work together and share ideas. Behaviour is good. When asked what they enjoy, pupils point to academic activities like sums and writing, as well creative ones such as painting. Their positive approach to learning bodes well for their future education, although their academic progress has room for further acceleration. Pupils readily identify what they should do to avoid accidents in the playground and avoid being bullied. They know, too, which foods contain too much sugar and fat, even though some of these still remain as popular as their fruit snacks. Older pupils play a valuable role in supporting reception children at playtime, and pupils are confident that staff listen to their ideas. Nevertheless, the school is aware that there is more scope for canvassing and using pupils' ideas when considering improvements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A solid foundation of satisfactory teaching and learning is enhanced by many good lessons where pupils progress well. The use of some very structured approaches to teaching ensures lessons are well focused with clear learning goals. Teaching assistants are fully involved in these teaching programmes and provide effective help to small groups of pupils who need extra support or who are learning to speak English as an additional language. All pupils are interested and keen to take part, and especially so when lessons have a practical, dramatic or topical content that makes learning more 'real' and exciting. The school's drive to improve pupils' speaking skills is clearly evident, although some teachers are more confident than others in the use of discussion among pupils to generate ideas and, sometimes, there are limited opportunities for pupils to make comment. Used with considerable skill, as seen in Reception, discussion proves to be a highly valuable tool for reviewing what children have learned and encouraging them to expand their explanations.

Work is generally matched to pupils' ability. Sometimes tasks are modified more precisely to meet individual needs, but this does not yet happen as often as it should. As a result, activities are not as consistently challenging as they should be, including those for the more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has a number of strengths. First among these is provision in Reception, where there is a wide range of stimulating activities and first-hand experiences. In all year groups, good links within the local area for generating visits, trips wider afield and the many visitors to school enrich pupils' learning and widen their personal and social experiences. The many opportunities for pupils to be active and the school's attention to healthy eating are recognised in the national awards the school has achieved.

The school has sought a number of ways to improve the effectiveness of its curriculum. Planning is now more systematic and is sometimes sufficiently flexible to allow for a change to activities in response to how well pupils have done in earlier lessons. The focused nature of initiatives designed to improve basic skills has proved beneficial. However, these projects have also limited the breadth of reading and writing activities. The school is, therefore, already modifying the curriculum so that pupils meet a wider range of reading material and styles of writing. Staff are also aware that more use should be made of other subjects to allow pupils to write more often.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents readily praise the dedicated care given to pupils' well-being and personal development. Their appreciation is neatly illustrated in the comment of one parent who described the school as a 'special little' place. Levels of supervision and procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and pupils say they feel safe and secure. Links with outside agencies, including those responsible for attendance, are good. The introduction to Reception is friendly and welcoming for families and new children. The oldest pupils make visits to their new school too.

Improvements to assessment have secured accurate information about pupils' attainment. These advances are strongest in Reception. The progress of individual pupils is reviewed regularly, but systems need further refinement in relation to tracking the progress of specific groups of pupils, such as those learning to speak English as an additional language. Pupils know they have learning targets and some can say precisely what they are. The quality of marking is developing and is an area that the school plans to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The changes to staffing during the last few years have now largely settled down and enabled the school to get a firmer grip on improvement. The dedicated headteacher leads a hard-working and enthusiastic team. While maintaining strengths in pastoral support and pupils' personal development, the school has also secured an increase in attendance. In addition, important improvements to assessment and the curriculum are beginning to bear fruit. Nevertheless, staff and governors know there is more to do in order to accelerate the school's academic performance further.

An honest appraisal of its work by senior and subject leaders gives the school an accurate understanding of its strengths and shortcomings. A wide range of checks are used to monitor the school's work, although some key leaders have yet to be fully involved in analysing assessment data. Governors have given a good deal of thought and input to the selection of the new headteacher and arrangements have been made for a smooth transition in to next term. They are knowledgeable about the school's effectiveness and are already planning to sharpen their monitoring activities so that they can provide as much support and challenge as possible in the coming school year.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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12 July 2007

Dear Children,

Summerhill Infants School, St George, Bristol BS5 7LE

Thank you very much for welcoming us with such friendliness when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and spending time with you in lessons. It was good to hear that you like to do sums and writing and that you feel happy and safe at school. Your school is doing a satisfactory job overall and the staff and governors are working hard to make it even better. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out while we were with you.

Here are some more important things about you and your school:

- The adults in school take good care of you all and many of your parents think so too.
- You are happy, confident and polite, and you all behave well.
- More of you now attend school more regularly than you did.
- You make satisfactory progress overall, and those of you in Reception do well because you have so many exciting things to do – like looking at a real crab!
- Teaching is satisfactory, and quite a number of your lessons are also good.
- You have interesting visits, like the one recently to the seaside, and many visitors coming to work with you in school.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better:

- Make sure that you have a wide variety of reading and writing activities so that you make as much progress as possible in these subjects.
- Take care to ensure that all your lesson activities give you exactly what you need to do well and challenge all of you to do your very best.

With best wishes for the future,

Patricia Davies Lead inspector