

South Benfleet Foundation Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115262
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290183
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Eileen French
Headteacher	Mr Dominic Carver
Date of previous school inspection	28 October 2002
School address	High Road South Benfleet Benfleet Essex SS7 5HA
Telephone number	01268793276
Fax number	01268794836

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

South Benfleet Foundation Primary School is larger than average with children taught in two classes per year. There are more boys than there are girls. The school is slightly smaller than at the time of the last inspection reflecting the falling birth rate and the changing nature of the area. Attainment on entry to Reception reflects the full range of ability but is generally lower than the standards typically found in this age-group. However, the percentage of pupils who are receiving additional support to help them with their learning is below average, as is the number of children who have statements identifying their specific educational needs. There are very few pupils who come from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in this good school. It provides good value for money. Parents appreciate what the school is doing for their children. Because the school is a central and long-standing focal point in the local community, pupils gain a sense of continuity and tradition. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of good provision. This good progress continues across the school. By Year 2, standards are broadly what you would expect for pupils of this age and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average and overall achievement is good.

Pupils make good progress because the leadership of the school has ensured that the ethos of the school is calm and purposeful and that pupils greatly enjoy learning. The school's curriculum provides good opportunities in and out of lessons for pupils to gain a sense of success and take responsibility for themselves and others. Excitement, achievement and enjoyment are strong features of the school's curriculum. Teaching is good and teachers make lessons interesting. As one pupil put it, 'Even a normal school day is fun.' Because they are interested, pupils attend regularly, behave very well in lessons and have very good attitudes to learning. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils say that children are generally kind to one another. Consequently, they feel safe. Teachers work hard to foster pupils' confidence and self-esteem by being alert to any possible anxieties and providing positive reassurance. Because of a classroom ethos in which mistakes are used positively for reviewing learning rather than ridiculed, pupils have the confidence to accept and welcome challenge. Teachers and teaching assistants are very committed to the pupils and this is reflected in the effective standards of care they all receive. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the good quality of support they receive.

There have been marked improvements in the overall quality of leadership and management since the last inspection that have brought about significant recent improvements and demonstrate that the school's capacity for further improvement is good. Key issues identified in the last report have been addressed well. Provision for design and technology has improved and a new non-fiction library has been opened. One parent captured many of the strengths of the school when she wrote, 'the school is very family orientated, friendly and professionally run.' However, whilst the school has improved the play space for Foundation Stage children, it still only offers these pupils limited opportunities to develop their learning from the classroom into an outside area. There are plans to improve this soon when additions to the accommodation are complete.

A strong sense of professional teamwork has allowed all staff to take responsibility for improvements and lead on specific aspects, and ensures that the school knows its strengths and what it needs to do well. There are accurate systems for self-evaluation and the school tracks carefully whether pupils are making sufficient progress. These systems are being used well by all teachers at classroom level but are currently not being used sufficiently by the school's leadership to gain a fuller overview of standards and priorities or to allocate resources where they are most needed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the success of the plans to provide an easily accessible outdoor classroom and play space for the Foundation Stage pupils.

- Make sure that the school's leaders use the tracking of pupils' progress fully to gain an overview of standards and priorities, and to allocate resources to ensure all pupils make as much progress as they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, attainment on entry to the Reception class is below average, particularly in literacy and communication skills, and in children's ability to work and play together. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage because of the consistent good teaching they receive, so that by the time they start in Year 1 overall standards have improved, although they are slightly below average. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and so they attain broadly average standards. This good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and pupils attain standards which are above average. The school analysed the reasons for a dip in standards in 2005 and adjusted the way it taught certain aspects of mathematics, so that more pupils gained the higher levels in 2006. Targets are appropriate and the school has broadly met these in past years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their positive attitudes to learning help them to make effective progress. They enjoy school activities enormously and their attendance is above average. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils work carefully with equipment and they know how to keep themselves safe effectively. Good quality provision ensures that pupils understand the importance of leading healthy lifestyles; they say they enjoy the two or three physical exercise sessions they have each week and claim to eat more fruit and vegetables. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community. The school council gathers their ideas and concerns well and has undertaken an imaginative project to involve them in the design of a new welcome sign for the school. The choir has sung to the elderly who live nearby. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their spiritual development is effective mostly because teachers raise pupils' self-esteem and understanding of others. Their moral and social development is well supported by the school's personal development planning. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, ensuring pupils make effective progress in their learning. Teachers use specific learning objectives and assessment criteria well in lessons. This means that pupils are clear about what they are expected to achieve. Lessons are particularly well planned and time is used effectively. Teachers use questioning well to deepen pupils' understanding. Good teaching methods, such as using small whiteboards to practise basic skills, mean that pupils are confident when they start on more independent work. The teaching of pupils who find learning harder is well matched to their needs. Their individual education plans are good and contain specific targets. Assessment systems are good and they are used well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school is good. Learning activities are well planned and allow pupils to enjoy a wide variety of topics linked to all subjects. The school's leadership places a high priority on pupils' standards and activities ensure that their attainment is good and that they are well prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to make learning interesting. The planning for pupils in the Reception classes is good. Resources have been used effectively but provision is limited by the fact that pupils do not have easy access to outdoor space adjacent to their classrooms. This means that the youngest pupils cannot easily extend their learning from the classrooms into an outside area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils are good. All adults successfully encourage good behaviour and effective academic achievement. Particularly good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties. Staff and other adults provide good role models. Pupils say they enjoy school greatly and lessons are fun. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare are good and regularly reviewed. Child protection arrangements are rigorously implemented. Pupils receive clear guidance about how to stay safe and look after themselves. They know they will receive help if they are worried. Any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively by teachers. The school works well in partnership with local schools and a range of outside agencies. Regular targets are set for all pupils, although the pupils do not fully understand what they need to do to attain higher levels of the National Curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher leads the school well. He has created an effective senior leadership team and they have grown into their roles. The school is ambitious to continue to build on its strengths and further enhance its work. Pupils' progress is tracked well but it is not always analysed as effectively as it might be by senior leaders. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the staff and they are united in a common purpose. Because the school has increased teachers' confidence and competence in their leadership roles, it has a good understanding of what it needs to do next. The school environment has been improved significantly and there has been good investment in resources such as in ICT, including data projectors and interactive white boards which are used effectively. Governance is effective. Governors are supportive of the work of the school and there is a core of the governing body which is particularly active in school life, prepared to question and which engages in properly informed debate. The chair of governors is very experienced and provides a strong sense of continuity.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 March 2007

Dear Pupils

South Benfleet Foundation Primary School, High Road, South Benfleet, Essex, SS7 5HA

I am writing to thank you for your help in the recent inspection of your school and to share with you our findings. It was evident from meeting you that you are proud of the school and enjoy the work you are doing. You told us that teachers work hard to make the lessons interesting. One pupil said that, 'Even a normal school day is fun' and I have included that comment in the parents' report because it seemed to us to say precisely why teaching is so good in your school. We think that you make good progress across the school because you find lessons enjoyable. One of the reasons teachers are able to make the lessons interesting and fun is because you behave very well in lessons and have really good attitudes to learning because you want to do well.

You also told us that teachers were kind and so were other children, and because of this you felt safe. If there was a problem, you said, 'It would get sorted quickly.' One pupil said the school was, 'cosy, welcoming and encouraging,' another that, 'Children are polite and friendly, indeed everyone has a friend,' whilst yet another said that 'Everyone is so positive and encouraging.' We agree with all these views. We think that the school is led and managed well by Mr Carver and his team. This is a good school and all staff are working hard on your behalf. You have helped your school to succeed and you can continue to do so by helping Mr Carver build on the school's many strengths to make it even better.

We have asked Mr Carver to change two important things. He is already working hard on the first one.

- Develop an outdoor classroom and play area for the very young children so they can move easily from the classroom indoors to an outside play area.
- Put in place more regular meetings with your class teachers to review whether you are making the best possible progress.

We very much enjoyed being in your school.

All good wishes for the future.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector