

# South Borough Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118305
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	291085
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carole Skinner

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	255
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Ellwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Caroline Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2001
<b>School address</b>	Postley Road Maidstone ME15 6TL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 752161
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is situated in an area of significant social deprivation to the south of Maidstone. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is higher than average. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected for the age of the children. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is more than twice the national average. Around 80% of the pupils are of White British origin, while the remaining 20% come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased significantly during the past two years but is lower than the national average. The school's roll has fallen by the equivalent of more than two classes since the last inspection, despite the addition of a Nursery in 2004. This trend is continuing, in common with other schools in the local area. There is a high rate of mobility as pupils join and leave the school at different times during the year. In the last academic year, approximately 25% of the pupils on roll either joined or left at times other than the usual times of admission or leaving.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is an improving school that gives pupils a satisfactory standard of education. It has been through a difficult patch in recent years when the pace of improvement has been slow. Satisfactory leadership and management have tackled with perseverance the challenges presented by a falling roll and a high turnover of both staff and pupils, which have made it difficult to establish a sense of stability. As a result of their efforts, and with valuable support from the local authority, the quality of teaching, learning, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support for the pupils have all improved and are now satisfactory. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory overall and good for the three- to seven-year-olds. The school is still working hard to overcome a legacy of underachievement amongst pupils in the older junior classes.

Standards have remained stubbornly low for a number of years. They are still exceptionally low in Year 6 because of the very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. However, prospects for the future look much brighter. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in all areas of learning because of the good teaching they receive. By the time pupils move into the juniors, standards are broadly in line with national averages. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 now make satisfactory progress as a result of new initiatives which are focusing teachers' attention on how to help pupils learn most effectively. They are doing better in English than in mathematics and science, where they lack sufficient skills when solving problems and carrying out investigations.

Teachers are becoming more skilful at assessing pupils' attainment. The school has introduced good systems for tracking individual pupils' progress from term to term. However, there are still some inconsistencies and inaccuracies in teachers' assessments which the school is trying to iron out. Although teachers set individual targets for every pupil, these are not always expressed in language that the pupils can easily understand. Consequently, they are of limited use and pupils are not involved well enough in checking their own progress.

Pupils' personal development is good because of the strong emphasis on moral and social responsibility and increasing their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils enjoy learning and contribute well to the life of the school. The vast majority behave well and are proud of their achievements. The school provides a rich and varied diet of activities in addition to the curriculum, including sport, drama, music and art. It has forged effective links with parents, local schools and external agencies to support pupils' learning.

The leadership and management have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness and have identified the right priorities to pursue, both in the short and longer term. Their drive for improvement is now gathering momentum and its impact can be seen in pupils' accelerating rates of progress. The school is well equipped to make even greater improvement in the coming months and years.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics and science, particularly in problem solving and investigative activities.
- Improve the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessments.
- Involve pupils more productively in using their targets to help them improve their work. 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**

Children make good progress, often from very low starting points, in the Nursery and Reception classes, where excellent foundations are laid in their personal and social development. They make good progress in acquiring basic skills and many are close to reaching expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 maintains this good progress. Standards have risen year on year and are now in line with national averages by Year 2. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are still 'playing catch-up' as teachers strive to overcome the limitations of pupils' past underachievement. The signs are promising. Although standards in Year 6 remain exceptionally low, those in Years 3, 4 and 5 are rising and pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. This includes pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Strategies to raise standards in reading and writing have had a good impact and pupils now achieve well in English. Standards in mathematics and science are lower as pupils' skills in problem solving and investigative work are often limited by their inadequate understanding of specific subject vocabulary.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good personal development is a key factor in their improving rates of progress. It is outstanding in the Foundation Stage. Most pupils have positive attitudes to school and participate in lessons with enthusiasm. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that there is always someone they can talk to if they have concerns. They have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. Many take part in the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because these aspects are given prominence in the curriculum and in daily assemblies and regular class discussions. Peer mediators help to sort out disagreements and problems between other pupils. Older pupils act as 'buddies' and look after younger ones. The school council contributes well to decisions about how to make the school better. Most pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually, but the unauthorised absences of a small minority continue to affect overall attendance rates. Pupils are prepared well for future life by learning to work collaboratively on various projects but their problem solving skills are not sufficiently well developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Good teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 helps pupils to achieve well. In other year groups, it is satisfactory overall, with some that is good and outstanding, but there are inconsistencies. For example, teachers do not always explain to pupils the purpose of an activity and what they are expected to have learned by the end of it. Occasionally, pupils are given work that is either too easy or too difficult and teachers' questioning does not always take into account pupils' differing levels of understanding. There are inconsistencies in marking and in the accuracy of teachers' assessments. A whole-school focus on improving how pupils learn has already increased the proportion of good teaching throughout the school. Teachers

and assistants provide good support for the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and for those learning to speak English. This enables those pupils to make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. The school acknowledges that its main task now is to disseminate the good practice that already exists in order to achieve greater consistency throughout the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The well-planned curriculum for Nursery and Reception children enables them to learn effectively through discovery and investigation in the classroom and in the spacious and well-equipped outdoor play areas. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is improving in response to new initiatives, some of which are at an early stage of implementation. Effective links between subjects are being developed, although these are more evident in Years 1 to 3 than in the older classes. Problem solving and investigative work in mathematics and science are not sufficiently well developed. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly since the last inspection and this has raised standards. There is a good range of additional specialist programmes to support pupils with learning difficulties. A good programme of personal, social and health education encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and contributes well to their social and emotional development. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of after-school clubs, and by visitors from the community and from local secondary schools.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school pays good attention to ensuring pupils' health, safety and well-being. The 'Green Room', where trained counsellors help pupils to manage inappropriate behaviour, has helped to reduce the number of exclusions. The family liaison officer provides valuable support for pupils and their parents and a 'listening ear' for those who need it. Certificates and recognition in daily assemblies reward pupils for good achievement, behaviour, attendance and effort. Training for pupils as peer mediators and buddies involves them effectively in supporting each other. Academic guidance for pupils is not sufficiently effective in ensuring that they make consistently good progress. Pupils are not involved well enough in setting and reviewing their own targets or checking how well they are doing. The school has appropriate systems for tracking pupils' progress from term to term but teachers' assessments are sometimes inaccurate and this limits their effectiveness.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The leadership and management have had a good impact on improving the quality of learning in the Nursery, Reception and infant classes. This illustrates the school's good capacity for further improvement. Efforts to improve the quality of learning and raise standards for pupils in Years 3 to 6 have been slower to take effect but are now having a greater impact. The headteacher leads the school well and has a strong vision for its future development. The senior management team has taken good advantage of the support offered by the local authority and is thorough in evaluating the effectiveness of new initiatives. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is accurate but the checking of teachers' assessments lacks sufficient

rigour. Subject leaders are playing an increasingly effective role in supporting staff and driving improvement. The English and ICT leaders have been instrumental in raising standards in their subjects. In mathematics and science, the pace of progress has been slower because of lack of continuity in leadership. However, leaders know exactly where improvement is needed and have already introduced strategies to improve teaching and learning and raise standards. The recently appointed inclusion manager is influential in ensuring that the school meets the needs of the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

19 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Borough Primary School, Maidstone, ME15 6TL

We enjoyed meeting you and watching some of your lessons when we visited your school. Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work. We were pleased to see that most of you behave well and are courteous and helpful. You play an important part in helping the school to run smoothly. You take your responsibilities seriously, especially the school council, peer mediators and 'buddies'. The school is helping you to grow into confident and sensible young people. The adults look after you well and give you extra help when you need it.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. It is steadily improving and it does some things well. The biggest improvements have happened in the Nursery, Reception and infant classes – you make good progress in those classes because the teaching is good and you learn in a way that helps all of you to make good progress.

Although you are now making satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6, this has not always been the case and the standards you reach by Year 6 are still not high enough. You have been making good progress in English recently but are not doing well enough in mathematics and science, especially in problem-solving and investigative work. This is partly because you do not always understand the special language that you need to know in those two subjects. We have asked the school to help you reach higher standards in these areas of your learning.

Your headteacher and the senior staff want your school to be good at everything and they know exactly what needs to be improved. They are introducing new ideas to help make all of the teaching and the curriculum good in every subject. These have not all had time to have an effect yet. In order to help the staff in their efforts, we have asked them to make sure that all of the teachers assess your work very carefully and accurately to make sure that they know exactly how well you are doing. We have also asked them to give you targets that are written in a way you can easily understand. Then you can use them every day to help you improve your work.

We hope you will carry on working hard and listening well to your teachers. You can help them even more by remembering to check your targets when you are working.

With best wishes for future success,

Carole Skinner Lead inspector