



Southtown First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121010
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291951
Inspection dates 31 October –1 November 2006
Reporting inspector Kathryn Burdis HMI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Tamworth Lane
School category	Community		Southtown, Southtown
Age range of pupils	4–8		Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR31 0HJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01493 653908
Number on roll (school)	164	Fax number	014934 45460
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Casey
		Headteacher	Mrs Susan Gill
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 1999		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–8	31 October –1 November 2006	291951

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Southtown First School serves an urban area on the south side of Great Yarmouth. It is in an area of high social deprivation and many children have free school meals. A high proportion of children move in or out of the school throughout the year. Many children start school with standards much lower than those found typically for this age group. There are many more boys than girls but a lower than average number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A high number of children have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school has a 'nurture class' for a small number of children who find settling to learning hard and a language development centre (LDC) for 8 children from the local area who have speech or communication difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils. Improvements to the leadership and management of the school have resulted in improving standards and good progress for children of all abilities. The work of the school is monitored well and there is now a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the action needed to bring about further improvements. Some innovations have taken too long to implement and others have not been fully evaluated to establish their impact on children's learning. Despite this, inspectors judge the overall effectiveness of the provision to be good because of the good teaching, improving levels of achievement and the high level of personal support given to each individual child and their family or carer. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further but needs to ensure planned changes happen fast enough.

Attainment continues to be well below the national average. Standards vary each year because of the high number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and the numbers that move in and out of the school, but the overall trend is heading in the right direction. Good systems for tracking the progress of individuals and effective teaching ensure that children, no matter what their circumstances or prior experiences, achieve well and make good progress especially in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). In the Foundation Stage, children are taught well and make good progress in literacy, numeracy and physical skills but do not progress as well in personal, social and emotional development.

The satisfactory school curriculum is well structured but it is not developed well enough to ensure children in mixed-age classes receive enough creative and practical experiences. Children in the language development centre (LDC) receive specialist speech therapy support and make good progress against targets set for them. Children's personal development is good and they enjoy coming to school, behave well and make a positive contribution to their school community. All adults are concerned for pupils' well-being as shown by the effective support for personal and social development, opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and approaches to keeping children safe. Almost all parents and carers rightly feel that their children are cared for well. Children in the nurture group are supported well in developing socially and emotionally and extend their skills as learners but further evaluation of the impact of the provision on the group's learning is required. The school has good links with external providers, such as speech therapists, and with parents and carers. These ensure the large number of children with additional educational requirements have their needs identified and met, although not all 'looked after' children have a personal education plan.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by developing how the curriculum is planned and monitored to provide more purposeful links between subjects that encourage creativity and practical activities.

- Increase the detail and clarify the timescales of actions in the school development plan to increase the rate at which agreed developments are implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- Provide increased opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to develop their independent learning, personal, emotional and social skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards reached by learners at the end of Year 2 teacher assessments vary widely each year but are well below average overall and particularly low in writing. Many children join the school with low levels of attainment and make very good progress in the Foundation Stage especially in physical development and literacy and numeracy skills. However, only a few pupils attain the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Children continue to make good progress during Key Stage 1 and Year 3 and carefully targeted support to individuals or groups is resulting in more achieving the nationally expected level at the end of Year 2. Girls achieve better standards than boys and an increasing number of more able children achieve the higher levels in reading and numeracy. The school's good use of data and tracking of children's progress shows that all children make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points, especially pupils who have been at the school from the Reception class through to Year 3. The arrangements for supporting children with learning or emotional difficulties are good. They make good progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills and managing their behaviour.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Children clearly enjoy school and confidently discuss any concerns with teachers and teaching assistants. They say they feel safe in school and know that rules are there to keep them safe. They have no concerns about bullying and think the school deals with their problems well. Moral and social development is good. All adults act as good role models for promoting thoughtful, caring relationships and children are considerate to each other. Their behaviour and attitude to work are usually very good. There are good opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures through assemblies. Attendance figures are below average largely due to the high turnover of children as names need to stay on the school's register until they enrol at their next school. Children are very aware of the importance of eating healthy food and taking exercise. Opportunities to act as school councillors and playground monitors enable them to make a positive contribution to their school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Relationships between adults and children are positive. Well structured activities, designed to reflect the ages and abilities of children in the class, have a positive impact on extending children's literacy and numeracy skills and developing their confidence as learners. Teachers track the progress of individual children well and make sure they get the right kind of support when they assess that they are underachieving. A good range of methods is used to motivate children, and teaching assistants are deployed well to support the learning of individuals and small groups of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. In the best lessons, teachers plan exciting learning experiences which provide ideas and memories for children to write and talk about and they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and is planned with a strong focus on developing children's basic skills. Although the curriculum is broad and balanced, the content and range of activities do not consistently ensure relevance and enjoyment for all children. There are good arrangements to promote children's awareness of healthy lifestyles through curriculum activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum is planned well and provides children with a good start to their education although the inspectors saw too few opportunities for them to make choices and work independently. Good planning ensures that children placed in the nurture class and the LDC receive similar curriculum experiences to those in the main school, supporting successful inclusion when appropriate. ICT is increasingly being used well to extend children's learning. The school provides a satisfactory range of after-school activities that enrich the children's learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Children report that they feel happy and safe and good behaviour is maintained within the calm, supportive school atmosphere. Children know that adults will listen to any concerns they might have and their views are regularly sought. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to support pupils with additional needs, including those in the LDC and 'looked after' children, although there have been difficulties in obtaining personal education plans for this latter group. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and comply with the latest government requirements and regular checks are carried out to ensure children remain safe. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle, providing children with fruit daily and regular exercise. Pupils' books are marked regularly and encouraging comments are made but they do not provide enough information about how the work

could be improved. Links with parents are good but they do not receive enough information about the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection and are good. The headteacher and her deputy work well together. Performance data is now used very effectively to track the progress of children and plan action to address any identified underachievement. Teaching is good and standards have risen as a result. All children are well cared for and supported and are fully included in the life of the school. Monitoring of all aspects of the school's provision has improved as a result of the positive impact of the participation in the Primary Leadership Programme. The school's self-evaluation demonstrates that staff and governors have a clear understanding of what more needs to be done. Governors have supported the senior management team satisfactorily. However, governors have done too little to evaluate the impact of innovations on the quality of provision for them to hold the school to account sufficiently. The next challenge for the school is to secure even faster improvement by translating its understanding of its strengths and weaknesses into more detailed action plans and rigorous ways of checking their progress.

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	3
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	4
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	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?	2
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?	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.

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	3
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	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

2 November 2006

Dear Children

Southtown First School, Tamworth Lane, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 0HJ

Thank you so much for the friendly way you welcomed us into your school. We really enjoyed meeting you all and learned a lot about your school from our conversations and looking at your work. This has helped us to write a report about the things that we saw at Southtown First School.

There are many things we liked about your school.

- Your behaviour is very good.
- You are kind and polite to each other.
- Your reading, writing and number skills get better all the time.
- Your teachers are good at helping you to improve your work.
- All the adults who work with you want to help you to do the best you can.
- Mrs Gill and Mrs Hutton have good ideas to improve the school even more.

There is also small number of things we would like the school to do to improve.

- Make changes to the curriculum so you can do more creative, practical and enjoyable activities.
- Find ways of letting the youngest children work independently and choose what they are going to do more often.
- Make sure the good ideas teachers have for improving the school happen more quickly.

Thank you again for helping us.

With best wishes

Kathryn Burdis (HMI)