

Southdown Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109004
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	298538
Inspection date	3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bailey
Headteacher	Teresa Austin
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2006
School address	Mount Road Southdown Bath BA2 1LG
Telephone number	01225 424761
Fax number	01225 334181

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number speak languages other than English at home. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is also above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has improved since its previous inspection in May 2006 and is now satisfactory. At that time significant improvement was required in pupils' standards and achievement. There was a significant improvement in the standards pupils attained in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006. This improvement has largely been sustained amongst current pupils. There have also been improvements in pupils' behaviour, in the curriculum, and in teachers' use of data to track pupils' progress and to plan appropriate work. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Pupils start school having attained average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6 they attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This is satisfactory achievement. In some areas pupils make good progress, for instance many can speak at length and with fluency about the work they have been doing. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well, report a significant reduction in bullying, and feel safe and well cared for at school. They have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in staying healthy. The school's clear expectations of good behaviour and emphasis on developing pupils' sense of responsibility and self-worth have led to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and has a number of strengths. These include giving pupils a good understanding of what they are learning and why, and a good emphasis on developing literacy skills in much of their work. The marking of work and the use of data to track pupils' progress has led to improvements in the planning of work to meet differing needs. However, pupils do not always understand what they need to learn next and they are not always given good enough opportunities to learn independently, which slows their progress. The curriculum is good. It has been adapted to ensure that pupils understand the links between subjects and the relevance of what they learn, greatly increasing their enjoyment of school. Pupils are also very enthusiastic about the good range of trips, visits and other additional activities that the school provides. Pupils receive good care, guidance and support. They are cared for very well and receive satisfactory academic guidance through the setting of targets for improvement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a broadly accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses but this lacks detail in some areas, such as in monitoring the impact of the behaviour policy. Senior leaders, some of whom are inexperienced, have not yet had enough training to be fully effective although they are beginning to develop the skills necessary to support the energetic headteacher. This is starting to improve pupils' achievement. Although governors support the school and monitor its work, there is currently a lack of suitable systems to fully enable efficient monitoring, evaluation and planning to take place, which leads to some inconsistent practices across the school. For instance, an excellent system for setting and monitoring targets for pupils with learning difficulties, developed by one member of staff, is not yet used throughout the school. Nevertheless, the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and is in a satisfactory position for improvement to continue.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching by ensuring that pupils always understand what they need to learn next, and have more opportunities to work independently.

- Ensure that effective practices are adopted by all staff by improving the rigour of monitoring and evaluation and by giving less experienced senior leaders more opportunities to develop their skills.

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

Pupils start school having attained average standards at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6 they are attaining average standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In some classes, pupils make good progress, for instance in developing their ability to write a story with accuracy and fluency, but in other classes progress is slower. A strength across the school is the development of pupils' ability to speak confidently about their work, although this is more evident in boys than in girls. However, pupils of both genders achieve equally well in other aspects of their work, as do pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils in the early stages of learning English make the same progress as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school correctly places great emphasis on managing pupils' behaviour and in encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils respond well to this and their behaviour is good. They say that staff act fairly and that the consequences of poor behaviour are readily understood. This work, together with activities to develop pupils' understanding of the beliefs and feelings of others, leads to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils also say that changes to the curriculum have greatly increased their enjoyment of school and this is now good. Their attendance is satisfactory and improving due to the school's actions to encourage it. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, for instance in understanding the value of different food types and the consequences of eating to excess. They make a satisfactory contribution to the community, although the range of opportunities to do this is not extensive. The development of the skills they will need in later life is also satisfactory. Pupils designing and running stalls for the school fair are good examples of such work, but opportunities for pupils to routinely be independent in lessons are limited. Their literacy and numeracy skills are no better than satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Good features are teachers' management of pupils' behaviour and the opportunities teachers give pupils to speak and listen, for instance when pupils in Year 5 interrogated fellow pupils who were playing the role of Dick Turpin. Pupils are usually clear about what they are expected to learn, but this is not always the case when teachers do not check sufficiently. Assessment and marking are used well by some teachers to plan work suitable for all pupils, but this is also more effective in some lessons than in others. Teachers and their assistants provide good support for pupils including those with learning difficulties or disabilities,

but when working with other pupils they sometimes intervene too quickly with the 'correct' answer, reducing pupils' opportunities to learn for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been broadened to enable pupils to develop their skills through work linked to a range of subjects. This is working well in developing literacy skills, for instance when Year 6 studied *Oliver Twist* as part of a Victorian theme. The approach is enjoyed greatly by pupils. A start has been made on developing other skills, including numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in this way. Staff have identified some gaps in the provision which they are working to remedy. Pupils have exciting opportunities for extended work in subjects such as art and physical education. There is a good range of additional activities, including clubs, trips and visits, which pupils greatly enjoy and appreciate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils and parents greatly value the very good pastoral care that pupils receive. All requirements for child protection are in place and staff do excellent work in supporting pupils' emotional needs. As a pupil said, 'There's always someone willing to listen.' There are very good partnerships with external agencies and with infant and secondary schools that help to safeguard pupils' well-being. The school works hard to encourage parents to become involved in their child's education and is meeting with some success in this.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Some is excellent, as for some pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities who receive particularly good support. All pupils understand that they have targets, but they are not always clear about how they will achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers have worked hard, and with success, to improve pupils' achievement and behaviour. Systems for monitoring school effectiveness have improved and are now satisfactory. Teaching is being monitored more effectively than at the last inspection and this has led to improvements in quality, especially among less experienced teachers. The use of assessment data and the marking of work are also much sharper. Consequently, senior managers now have a sound understanding of what needs to be done next and they have rightly identified that monitoring and evaluation is not yet rigorous enough in all areas of the school's work. This means that there are still some inconsistencies in practice and monitoring lacks detail. There are some good examples of staff and governors working together to improve things, such as in redesigning the curriculum, but some of the most effective work in the school has not yet been adopted by all staff. Senior leaders, some of whom are inexperienced, are enthusiastic and their effectiveness, which is currently satisfactory, is improving. Led by the experienced and energetic headteacher, they are in a satisfactory position to ensure that improvement continues.

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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 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?	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?	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

13 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Southdown Junior School, Southdown, Bath BA2 1LG

We very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. We want to thank you for spending time with us. We especially enjoyed seeing your work on display around the school. Your school is a satisfactory school with plenty of good things about it. You told us correctly that it has improved since inspectors last visited in 2006. These are the most important things.

- You make steady progress and standards in your work are about average.
- Your behaviour is good and you say there is little bullying.
- You have a good understanding of other people's beliefs and feelings.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- You like the way your work is linked through themes and tell us you enjoy school more because of this, and that you also enjoy all the trips, visits and sport.
- Teaching is satisfactory and has a number of good points, such as the way teachers give you lots of opportunities tell your ideas to others, and to listen to theirs.
- All the staff look after you very well.
- The school is led and managed in a satisfactory way and you think highly of it.
- There are ways in which the school can be improved. We have asked the teachers to:
- make sure you always understand what you need to learn next, and have more opportunities to work without help. You can help by always telling the teacher when you do not understand what to do
- make sure that the many good things happening in school are used well by all the staff, and also make sure that teachers who lead the subjects have any training they need.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler Lead Inspector