

Soho Parish CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101131
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	307595
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Elizabeth Mitchell
Headteacher	Ms Rachel Earnshaw
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	23 Great Windmill Street London W1D 7LF
Telephone number	020 7641 7311
Fax number	020 7641 7334

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Soho Parish is a small primary school that occupies a very cramped site in central London. It serves a culturally and socially diverse community, containing pockets of high deprivation. The largest ethnic group, comprising about a third of the roll, is the pupils of White British heritage. Just over a third of pupils have English as a second language, and about a quarter of all pupils are at an early stage of learning English. These proportions are well above the national averages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is about average. About two-thirds of these pupils have more severe difficulties, and about a half of these have specific needs in speech, language and communication. Class sizes are small because the rooms are much smaller than is the case in purpose-built schools. Owing to the nature of the site, access to rooms other than the single downstairs classroom would be extremely difficult for any pupil with limited mobility.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Soho Parish CofE Primary is a good school. It is an important part of its community and makes excellent use of many local links to enrich its very broad curriculum. Parents value the school highly. They particularly appreciate the family atmosphere and its impact on their children's personal development. One summarised these views when commenting, 'This is a unique school that really motivates its children.' Another added, 'My children are confident, happy and above all, feel valued.'

An important factor in the school's success is the excellent climate for learning evident in all classes. This stems from the pupils' outstanding personal development. Their impeccable behaviour and real desire to learn help the school successfully meet the challenges presented by the very cramped accommodation.

Pupils make good progress in developing their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This improvement is recent, and stems from the good use made of the new system for monitoring pupils' progress. Previously, pupils who fell behind were not always identified and helped quickly enough; consequently, they sometimes underachieved in the national tests. The new monitoring system has enabled the school to fully address this weakness. The good progress now made is yet to impact on standards. These are currently average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, but are set to rise.

The school's focus on providing pupils with a very broad education is not reflected in the results of national tests. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities to develop their talents across a wide range of subjects. They also appreciate the small class sizes. Comments such as, 'it feels as though we belong to one big family', 'we get lots of attention' and, 'our lessons are fun and we get lots of different things to do,' typify pupils' responses when asked for their views about school. The impact of the well-rounded education provided is evident in pupils' mature approach to their studies. The older ones in particular are good at organising their work and evaluating their own progress. These skills, among many others, ensure that they are exceptionally well prepared for a future as life-long learners.

Each child matters in this school. Everyone is warmly welcomed and equally valued. An excellent feature is the way in which the school integrates newcomers, some with limited English, and enables them to play a full part in all activities. The teaching is good overall; however, there are variations in its quality. In most lessons, teachers make good use of assessment information to provide achievable challenges and plan interesting and exciting activities for pupils. Consequently, they learn well. However, teaching is sometimes not challenging enough when teachers' planning does not fully reflect pupils' needs. Where this occurs, the pupils' progress slows.

Overall, the leadership at all levels is good, and is now ensuring that pupils achieve well. Particularly noteworthy is the clear leadership of the headteacher. The subject leaders are yet to ensure that their work focuses sharply on improving standards, by making full use of the new systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a very strong commitment to continuous improvement and robust systems to help ensure that this happens. Despite the inconsistencies found in teaching, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Reception vary considerably from year to year. Currently, they are above average. Children make good progress because teaching reflects a secure understanding of how very young children learn. They enjoy a great deal of individual attention, and adults are adept at responding to the different needs of each individual. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children. However, the impact of the work done to promote children's independent learning is sometimes reduced when adults over-direct it and focus too much on the activity rather than the intended learning. Not all opportunities for outdoor learning are taken. The well equipped, but very small playground is the only outdoor learning area available for Reception children, and this has to be shared with all pupils at morning break and lunchtime. During the afternoon sessions, it becomes an extra learning space for the Reception children. However, at some other times during the day it is available but is not used.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in teaching so that more lessons are good or better.
- Ensure that the middle managers focus more strongly on the impact of their work on pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The improvements made in more accurately assessing pupils' attainment, closely checking on their rates of improvement, and providing extra help where needed are resulting in good progress. In Year 6, for example, almost all pupils are making satisfactory or better progress. About two thirds are making good progress in reading and writing, and over half are making good progress in mathematics.

Pupils achieve well irrespective of ethnicity or gender. Those with learning difficulties achieve well, as do those in the early stages of learning English. The specific learning needs of these pupils are carefully assessed and they receive good quality help in lessons. For example, a small group with difficulties in speaking and communicating was observed taking part in a class discussion. To ensure the pupils' successful participation, they not only received the close support of a teaching assistant but also had picture cues to help them focus on their responses.

All pupils benefit from the good amount of individual attention they receive. They are motivated to achieve through their personal targets. The older pupils in particular have a very good understanding of precisely what they need to do to improve. Pupils in Year 6 are good at judging their own progress and help each other improve by evaluating each other's work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all aspects of school life. Relationships throughout the school are of high quality. Pupils are considerate towards one another, and mix freely. They have a very clear understanding of the value of healthy lifestyles. They also have a very good awareness of how to keep safe, which is particularly important given the school's location. In discussions, pupils showed a keen appreciation of the

value of sensible behaviour when walking through the locality. Within school, safe practices when handling equipment are firmly embedded. In almost all lessons, pupils are attentive. However, they sometimes become restless where activities are mundane or teachers talk for too long. Almost all pupils are very enthusiastic about coming to school, a view supported by their parents. The attendance rate does not reflect pupils' positive attitudes. This is because, despite the school's best efforts to promote good attendance, the poor records of a very small number of pupils have a disproportionate impact on overall attendance owing to the small number of pupils on roll. Pupils play a full part in the life of the school through their class and school councils. They also played their part in the successful project to raise £1.7 million to help improve the accommodation by writing to the Prime Minister.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are good at managing and organising their classes. They frequently provide achievable challenges for their pupils because they know them very well and assess their specific learning needs accurately. Teaching assistants help ensure that the pupils get good quality help when they need it. While teaching is good overall, there were areas for improvement in all lessons seen, most of them minor. Sometimes, teachers do not manage the lesson time well enough, and the lesson ends before the teacher has the opportunity to fully review and reinforce what pupils have learned. On other occasions, the teachers concentrate too much on the activities planned without giving enough thought to what the pupils are to learn. Consequently, these lessons lack a clear enough focus, and the pace of learning slows. Despite these inconsistencies, teaching most often results in good learning because teachers are skilled practitioners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school successfully overcomes the significant challenges presented by the cramped accommodation. It makes excellent use of its location to ensure that pupils benefit from the very wide range of cultural activities on offer. These include local arts and theatre projects in Soho, and visits to galleries and museums. Themed activities such as 'Enterprise' weeks where pupils gain first-hand experiences in business practice, and activities to promote pupils' ecological awareness, such as Environment Week and Sustainability Week, help give relevance to learning and develop pupils as young citizens. Some of the enrichment provided is specifically for pupils identified as gifted and talented. For example, those with particular aptitudes in sport develop their potential through the excellent links with local sports clubs, with the support of the Westminster Sports Unit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school places a great emphasis on ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. For example, staff ensure that each child has a parent or carer to go to at the end of the school day. The academic guidance provided for pupils is excellent. Pupils have clear targets to achieve in numeracy and literacy, and the teachers' marking of pupils' work provides useful pointers for future improvement. Since there are so few in each class, teachers have the time to work with individuals at some length and provide useful guidance in this way.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective teamwork and shared values are at the heart of the school's effectiveness in promoting a high degree of cohesion within the school community. The headteacher in particular has good expertise in identifying ways in which individual teachers can further develop their skills, and the school's effectiveness is regularly and rigorously monitored. Nonetheless, senior managers recognise that there is still room for improvement. For example, the new, robust system for checking on pupils' progress can provide an overview of the impact of teaching and help eliminate the inconsistencies still found. This system, which the deputy headteacher manages effectively, has been the catalyst for improvement in pupils' progress through the quicker identification of underachievement. All staff with management responsibility are now able to access information about pupils' progress to help inform their actions. However, this use of data is not yet embedded in their practice. Governors work hard to support the school. They have a clear understanding of the issues to be addressed, and are good at holding the school to account.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Soho Parish CofE Primary School, London, W1D 7LF

I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when I came to visit your school. I really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work.

Your parents think that you go to a good school, and I agree. Two of the things I particularly like about your school are the way that you become good learners, and the feeling that you all belong to one big family.

Here is a list of some of the other things I like.

- You make good progress.
- You all follow the values your school teaches you. Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming, and your behaviour is excellent.
- You learn well in lessons because the teaching you are given is good.
- You have many interesting things to do and lots of opportunities to develop your talents and interests.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher keep a close check on the progress you are making. This means that they can make sure that you get extra help when you need it.
- All of the adults in your school look after you very well.
- Your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are doing a good job.

Every school has something that could be better, so this is what I have asked your school to concentrate on to help you to learn more.

- I would like your school to make sure that even more of your lessons really make you think hard. I am sure that you are ready for this challenge!
- I would also like the teachers who are in charge of different subjects to make close checks on how well you are getting on in these subjects. This will help them when they plan future improvements.

With best wishes for your future success,

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector