

Sitwell Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106858
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309246
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Clark

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Len Richards
Headteacher	Mrs Skupien
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Grange Road Rotherham South Yorkshire S60 3LA
Telephone number	01709 531855
Fax number	0

Age group	5-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized infant school. Over half the pupils come from outside the immediate catchment area. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. There is a higher than average and increasing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

The school has achieved several awards. These include the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the second time in 2007; the Activemark Gold Award, renewed in 2007; the Healthy School's Mark in 2007 and the Excellence in Enterprise Award in autumn 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sitwell Infants is a good and improving school. Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve above average standards because of the exciting and inclusive curriculum and the good quality teaching. The headteacher and her senior leadership team have created a very open school where the views of all those involved, especially pupils and parents, are acted on to build well on the school's many strengths.

Children start school with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age, particularly in their language and communication. The results of the teacher assessments in Year 2 show that standards are above national and local averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are especially high in writing, with a significant proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards challenging targets because the school caters well for their needs.

Pupils' personal development is good with outstanding features. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily. For example, pupils take full advantage of nutritious school meals and the many opportunities for physical activity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their cultural development is outstanding. They have a very good understanding of the different faiths and nationalities represented in the school and of their local history and culture. Behaviour is good and pupils are tolerant towards each other. Very occasionally, pupils are too excitable and do not settle quickly enough to work. Attendance is good. Pupils are involved well in the life of the school, for example, through their membership of the school council.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Most teachers match work well to pupils' diverse needs. Many lessons are practical and exciting, and pupils have fun learning. Teachers make good use of computers to motivate and interest pupils. Teaching assistants support learning well, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak little English. Where teaching is less than good, teachers do not involve pupils enough in improving their own work. Very occasionally, staff do not ensure that pupils listen and concentrate well enough.

The curriculum is outstanding in many ways. Excellent links are made between subjects to make learning relevant. Frequent visits and visitors enhance learning in exciting ways. There is an outstanding range of clubs and activities after school. These include learning languages which pupils thoroughly enjoy. Care, guidance and support are good. Appropriate procedures are in place to keep pupils safe and healthy. Systems to track pupils' progress are good. Teachers do not always involve pupils consistently enough in their own learning or give enough guidance on how they can improve their work. Personal development is promoted well and behaviour and attendance are closely checked.

Since her appointment just over a year ago, the headteacher has built successfully on the school's many strengths. The senior leadership team and other staff with management roles are creative and enthusiastic. They make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the school, especially to the vibrant curriculum. Parents are supportive and the school acts quickly on their views. A significant minority expressed concerns about some misbehaviour during lunchtimes. However, this seems to be based on opinions formed before new supervisory and play leader systems were put in place in January. The inspection team observed consistently good behaviour at play and lunchtimes. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, although the

judgement on the curriculum is overly critical. There are rigorous procedures to check on the quality of learning and of provision. The governing body provides good support and direction to the school. The school has improved well since its last inspection and shows a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved well since it was last inspected. A high proportion of children have little or no English when they start school and many of their skills are below those expected for their age in many areas of their learning. All children benefit from the strong focus given to their literacy skills which enables them to reach standards in communication, language and literacy, which are only a little below the local authority average. In all other aspects of their learning all children reach the goals expected for their age. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Activities are planned well to meet the needs of children of all abilities. Resources are bright and exciting. Staff make very good use of interactive whiteboards and other information and communication technology (ICT) to motivate children. Staff use questions well, although some opportunities are missed to use them to deepen children's understanding of their own learning. The Foundation Stage is well led. Overall, there are good procedures to assess children's progress. The curriculum is outstanding because it is relevant to all children and there are very strong links made between all areas of their learning. Good links with parents and with the many pre-schools that children attend mean that children make an effective start to their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers consistently help pupils to understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities make good progress through Years 1 and 2. There has been outstanding achievement in writing over time. The keen emphasis on promoting pupils' basic skills results in Year 2 pupils consistently attaining at least above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' performance in writing is often better than in the other two subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in reading and writing was well above average in 2007. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Pupils' ability to solve problems is increasingly a strength in mathematics because teachers set them many thought-provoking activities. Handwriting is neat and pupils' write fluently for a wide range of different purposes. There are many examples of high quality work in art, history and science in the displays around school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils thoroughly enjoy their education. They find lessons fun and exciting. As a result of an outstanding curriculum, pupils have a high level of curiosity, motivation and interest in their learning. Occasionally, pupils are too excited and take too long to settle to their work because teachers do not always set clear enough expectations. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is outstanding. Not only do they acquire particularly good basic skills, but they also work very cooperatively and show pride in their work. They develop very good

entrepreneurial skills, learning how to raise funds and to make a profit through mini-enterprise projects. The pupils take on responsibilities well. The school council meets regularly and raises funds for charities. Pupils are mature for their age and show consideration for each other. They are reflective in lessons and assemblies, although their understanding of their own learning and achievement is not as secure as it could be. Pupils behave very well during playtimes and lunchtimes, mix well and play enthusiastically together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

As a result of good quality teaching and learning, all pupils make good progress. Classrooms are well organised, with a variety of high quality and up-to-date resources to support learning. ICT is used well by pupils and staff to enhance the quality of learning and teachers are skilled in the use of interactive whiteboards. Good teaching and learning is characterised by well-structured, interesting lessons. These engage pupils fully, spark their spontaneous, thoughtful contributions and enable them to develop their understanding and skills at a good pace. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and the majority respond well to the school's positive approach to managing behaviour. However, on occasions, at the start of lessons, some teachers take too long to settle pupils down. Many teachers use effective strategies to involve pupils in their own learning, for example, by giving them opportunities to discuss their ideas and to say how well they think are doing. However, this good practice is not embedded widely enough throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Leaders have been cautious in their judgement that the curriculum is good rather than excellent. Pupils enjoy and achieve well because their outstanding curriculum takes careful account of their diverse backgrounds and learning needs. The exciting curriculum is matched well to pupils' needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of basic skills as supported by the school's achievement in the 'Basic Skills Award'. The emphasis on key skills for life, such as problem solving, gives relevance to pupils' learning. There is an excellent range of after-school clubs including French, science, craft and ICT which further enhances pupils' learning. A wide range of visitors to school and exciting educational and cultural visits considerably enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils are very well prepared for their future economic well-being, for example, through participating in the 'Enterprise Project'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a very caring and friendly environment. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place and followed diligently. Staff work in close partnership with many outside agencies and institutions, especially in support of more vulnerable pupils and those for whom English is an additional language. Risk assessments are conscientiously carried out. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They say if they have a problem there is somebody they can go to for help. The school keeps a close eye on pupils' academic and personal progress to provide the right kind of support at the right time. The learning mentor provides a good first

point of contact for parents and pupils at the start of each day, which helps to resolve any concerns quickly. There are good arrangements in place to ensure that pupils move from one phase of their education to the next as smoothly as possible. Academic guidance is good and improving as it becomes more focused on target-setting. Although teachers' marking tells pupils what they have done well, it does not always enable pupils to be clear about how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and her deputy headteacher successfully provide a clear sense of educational direction which is shared by staff, governors and parents. Leaders and managers are very focused on raising achievement. Excellent use is made of the Internet to make it easy for staff and governors to see the progress made towards achieving improvement. Procedures to check on the quality of all aspects of provision are good. Nevertheless, criteria for measuring success are not always sharp enough to help rectify some minor weaknesses. The perceptive analysis of assessment information makes a good contribution to the school's effectiveness. The governing body is efficiently managed and has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors successfully support the headteacher in making improvements to the school's provision, such as the outdoor facilities in the Foundation Stage. Financial management is good and the school is well placed to continue to improve.

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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?	2
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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 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	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**

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. You were very friendly and helpful to us and we enjoyed your company in the classrooms and at lunchtimes.

Your school is providing you with a good education. The headteacher leads the school well, with a lot of help from the staff and the governors. You really enjoy your lessons and try very hard. You produce good work, especially in your writing. You are very interested in your work and you usually behave well. Your teachers do make sure that the activities you are given are exciting and lots of fun so you do really well. However, occasionally you need more help to know how to improve your work and we have asked the teachers to give you particular help with this. The teachers make sure that you all know how to keep healthy and safe, this is because all staff care for you really well. You have lots of extra clubs and exciting activities to join in.

You can help your teachers by continuing to behave well and working hard. Thank you for your help with the inspection. I wish you all the best for your future.