

South Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109124
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309887
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	163
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Wright
Headteacher	Caroline Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	South Street Bedminster Bristol BS3 3AU
Telephone number	01173 772340
Fax number	01179 031507

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools. A significant number of pupils enter or leave the school each year at other than the usual times. A small group of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The school has been through a period of instability, with several changes to the leadership. The present headteacher took up post in January 2007 and the deputy headteacher was appointed the following year. The school holds several awards, including Healthy School status and Activemark. A children's centre has recently opened on the school site, replacing a family unit that had been there previously. This provides day care for children aged nought to five years and a range of services for local families. Most staff working in the children's centre have taken up post since September. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are cared for in the children's centre or are in Nursery and Reception classes. In addition, there is after-school care that is managed privately.

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 provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has been through a prolonged period of disruption, with several changes to senior leadership. During this time, standards became exceptionally low. Under a new, permanent leadership team, this decline has been reversed so that, although standards overall remain low, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Firm action has been taken to eradicate weak teaching and to strengthen provision to meet pupils' learning needs. The impact of this is most evident in reading, where new approaches to teaching key skills have resulted in pupils beginning to make rapid progress and a consequent rise in standards throughout the school. More recent work to encourage pupils to write for a variety of purposes is also beginning to bear fruit. Pupils are making steady progress in mathematics but their grasp of number is still weak and a significant proportion struggle to identify appropriate methods for calculation. Mathematics is a particular focus for improvement this year.

Adjustments have been made to the curriculum to make it more meaningful to pupils. They are beginning to respond positively to a new thematic approach to learning and many are enjoying the current project on food. Planning usually identifies clear aims for each lesson and outlines a range of tasks for pupils at different stages of learning. However, activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for pupils who are quick to learn, and are sometimes too difficult for those who struggle with recording. New systems for tracking pupils' progress and attainment have been introduced. These are being used well to identify those pupils still needing extra support to boost their progress. The leadership recognises that there is scope to make more effective use of this information to further refine the match of tasks to the full range of pupils' abilities.

The school makes good use of links with local agencies and organisations to support individual pupils and to extend their learning. Pupils have opportunities, for example, to take part in workshops at a local theatre. Pupils have good awareness of the need to stay safe, eat healthily and take regular exercise. They make a good contribution to the community through fundraising for a variety of charities and participating in local events. Although aspects of pupils' personal development are good, there are weaknesses. Learning habits are not well established and many pupils struggle to maintain concentration. This is particularly evident in introductions to lessons when not enough is done to engage all pupils in thinking, for example, by using individual whiteboards to write responses to questions. Boys, in particular, tend to become disengaged and learning time is lost while teachers try to encourage them to re-focus their attention.

The recent opening of the children's centre is leading to a significant amount of development in the EYFS. Much of this is in the early stages, but leaders have identified the potential to share effective practice and to develop continuity and consistency in the provision for nought to five-year-olds. Children in the EYFS are well cared for and are benefiting from recent adaptations to provision to meet their learning and developmental needs.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The youngest children are well cared for in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. They settle quickly when they arrive because staff are ready to see to their individual needs, which might include providing breakfast, getting them involved in activities or just having a quiet time. Aspects of

provision are still being developed as staff reflect on how it might be improved; for example, the environment was recently reorganised to allow more interaction between younger and older children. Careful track is kept of sleep patterns and activities in which the children get involved so that parents get information on their child's day. Good use is made of observational notes and photographs to capture children's experiences, but these are not yet being transferred to records of progress that systematically track learning and development over time.

Nursery and Reception classes are well organised to provide a range of stimulating activities. There is an increasing emphasis on planning the curriculum to take account of children's interests and needs. Staff make good use of opportunities to extend children's language and ideas by getting involved in and talking about activities that the children choose for themselves. On occasions, however, the structure of the nursery session means that children are expected to participate in a group activity that does not interest them. As a result, opportunities to extend their learning are lost. Good use is made of large outdoor areas for a variety of lively activities that extend children's physical and creative skills. Staff have rightly recognised that there is scope to improve provision for outdoor learning. There are exciting plans in place to extend opportunities for imaginative play and the development of children's language skills.

By the end of the EYFS, children's skills and knowledge are below average, but this represents satisfactory progress given their starting points. There is no systematic approach to assessment to track children's progress through Nursery and Reception. This means that it is difficult to evaluate how well they have done and also creates difficulty in checking on the effectiveness of the curriculum in different areas of learning. A priority for improvement this year is to develop consistency in assessment arrangements for children from nought to five years so that progress can be systematically tracked and sustained as they move through the different settings.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' skills in calculation and understanding of how to use and apply their knowledge of number.
- Make effective use of information on pupils' levels of attainment to ensure that activities are adapted to meet the wide range of needs in each class.
- Develop a range of strategies to engage pupils, particularly boys, in the introductory parts of lessons so that teachers can assess their understanding.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Until recently, progress for many pupils throughout the school was at best erratic and often inadequate. The past year has seen improvement, although this has yet to be seen in results of national tests and assessments. Children get off to a sound start in the EYFS and are now making steady progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards are still exceptionally low at the end of Year 2, but over the past year there have been improvements in reading. Writing is now also showing improvement, with more pupils working at expected levels. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are also making satisfactory progress. Some are making gains at a good rate, particularly in writing, as they make up for ground lost earlier. Mathematics remains a weaker area throughout the school and is a current priority for improvement.

Throughout the school, girls generally do better than boys, particularly in literacy. The school has adapted the curriculum to try to engage boys' interest in writing, which is a particularly weak area. This is beginning to have an impact, with boys responding positively to writing about first-hand experiences, for example, a recent visit to a farm. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make steady progress against their individual targets. Those pupils in the early stages of learning English benefit from well-targeted support and make rapid gains in their understanding and use of the language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are generally positive about school and enthusiastic about the changes to the curriculum and the range of experiences that they are being offered. Their ability to apply themselves to learning is very variable. Many boys find difficulty in sustaining concentration and struggle with recording, which is a factor in their weaker performance. However, pupils' renewed interest in learning and improvements in basic skills in literacy and numeracy mean that they are adequately prepared for future learning.

Pupils develop good awareness of the wider world through participation in activities within the local community and links with schools in countries such as Uganda and China. The school council influences developments, for example, in selecting equipment for 'Huff and Puff' sessions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are well organised and teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to support explanations or introduce new ideas. However, not enough is done to involve all pupils in introductory sessions in lessons. As a result, the teacher has limited capacity to assess which pupils are grasping new learning and where there are misconceptions. While some lessons successfully meet the wide range of learning needs in each class, there are occasions when work is not adapted to challenge more able pupils and ensure that those with difficulties can succeed. Learning assistants play a valuable role in supporting teaching and learning and are generally well used to support individuals or groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Work is underway to make the curriculum more relevant to pupils' needs through planning linked to specific themes. Learning is supported by a range of visits that stimulate later work and link subjects together. Approaches to teaching literacy have been adapted to strengthen pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and word building and to encourage them to understand the features of different styles of writing. This is having a positive impact on raising standards. Adaptations have also been made to provision for mathematics but these are in the early stages and it is too early to see the impact. Planning for new themes does not yet clearly identify where skills in literacy and numeracy might be developed, and opportunities are missed to develop pupils' abilities to use and apply these skills in different contexts. Opportunities for learning are extended through a variety of clubs and activities organised with other local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Children are well known to staff and good efforts are made to meet their various needs. Good use is made of a range of services to support individual children and their families where necessary. Newcomers to school are welcomed and quickly settle in. Pupils respond well to rewards systems that recognise their achievements, for example, in gaining maths challenge badges. The school uses a good range of strategies to encourage regular attendance, including quick contact with families when a child is absent and taking a strict line on which absences can be authorised.

Most pupils are aware of their targets but these are not always expressed in child friendly terms and they do not always understand what they have to do to achieve them. Tighter systems for tracking progress are identifying where pupils are underachieving in order to provide extra support to boost progress. However, assessment information is not consistently used to plan for the full range of abilities in each class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior staff, subject leaders and governors share a clear sense of direction and a determination to raise standards. Recent initiatives have had a positive impact, evident, for example, in improved standards in reading. Much of what is being done is in the early stages but the school is moving in the right direction. Recent improvements indicate that the school has sound capacity to improve further.

A range of systems are in place to check on strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance. These include lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work and planning. Much of this has been carried out by the headteacher. Other senior leaders and middle managers are in the early stages of taking a role in monitoring the quality of work in the areas for which they are responsible. The school promotes community cohesion through local and international links and celebrating the diversity of cultures within the locality. It is still working to extend pupils' skills in working and playing together harmoniously.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Compass Point: South Street School and Children's Centre, Bristol BS3 3AU

You may remember that we visited recently to see how you are getting on at school. Thanks to all of you who explained what you were doing in lessons and who talked to us about the various activities that you get involved in. I thought you might be interested in what I am saying in my report. The school provides you with a sound education and your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make sure that things get even better.

You told us that you are finding learning more interesting and you enjoy the visits that link to the projects that teachers plan for you. The school has made lots of changes to help you make quicker progress in your learning and these are beginning to make a difference. You have got better with reading and writing. We could see that you are trying to use interesting words in your written work and to lay it out more clearly – well done.

You have lots of clubs and extra activities to help your learning. You know how important it is to take regular exercise, to eat healthily and to keep safe. The school council puts forward ideas on your behalf and is currently suggesting that you have playground friends again. We think that is a good idea as some of you find it difficult to sort out arguments at playtime.

We have suggested three things that the school needs to do now.

- Help you to get better at learning number rules and operations and understanding how to use what you know to solve problems.
- Make sure that you are all thinking and working right from the start of every lesson because some of you switch off very easily if you are not kept busy.
- Use all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing to make sure that work is at the right level for all of you.

You can help by really trying to concentrate when your teachers and LSAs are talking to you – remember that they are working hard to help you to learn!

With best wishes

Shirley Billington Lead Inspector