

# Sonning CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110016
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wokingham District Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	310177
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Pritiben Patel

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	159
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Kilgour
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Green
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Liguge Way Sonning Reading RG4 6XF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 693399
<b>Fax number</b>	01189 697298

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average school draws the majority of its pupils from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Most pupils are of White British origin and a small minority come from other backgrounds. A small percentage of pupils speak other than English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below the national average. The school has recently been awarded the National Healthy Schools Standard.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

A parent, representing the views of many, commented, 'Sonning is a small and caring school that works hard at motivating and encouraging the children'. Inspectors agree because it is a good school. Its Christian values and ethos contribute well to pupils' good personal development. Pupils are confident, polite, enjoy school, and the vast majority behave well.

Inspectors agree with the parent who commented, 'The headteacher is an excellent leader and she works well with her team of staff and governors'. She is very well supported by an able deputy and teachers work well together, demonstrating a good team spirit. The leadership team has improved systems for tracking pupils' progress and teachers' understanding of how to use this information to raise standards in 2007. A culture of responsibility amongst all staff has been successfully established, so that the whole school understand they have a part to play in ensuring pupils' progress. The school's focus on literacy has contributed to raising standards in writing, particularly for boys, who were not attaining as well as the girls. This demonstrates a good capacity for the school to move forward. Pupils achieve well from their average starting points and make good progress as they move through the school. They attain above average standards by the end of years 2 and 6, where standards are rising even further. However, standards in mathematics are not as high as those in English. One reason for this is because pupils are unclear about where they need to focus in order to improve their work in mathematics.

The school's improved tracking systems are helping to ensure that pupils' work is more closely matched to their abilities. Pupils understand the systems for evaluating their own work and use them well. Most pupils have individual targets for writing, and they are able to explain confidently what they need to do to achieve them. However, not all pupils have targets in mathematics and, consequently, they are not always clear about how they can improve. This is one reason why standards in mathematics are not as high as those in English. Both teachers and support staff provide good support for pupils with specific needs and, as a result, they make good progress. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good.

Strengths of teaching include good relationships between staff and pupils, and the use of the interactive whiteboard to engage learners. Lesson aims are made clear, and, consequently, pupils know what work is expected of them. Teachers' marking, although up to date and regular, is mainly celebratory in nature and does not consistently inform pupils about what they need to do to improve.

The good curriculum contributes well to the development of pupils' basic skills. A range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors make a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and personal development.

Most parents are very happy with the school. A small minority raised concerns about homework, pupils' achievement in mathematics and their behaviour, although the inspection team found no basis for these concerns.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enter school with the range of skills, knowledge and understanding usually expected of four year olds. They are well supported by both the teacher and support staff and they participate in a good range of interesting activities. These encourage pupils to think independently and to make decisions, as well as promoting co-operation with others.

Consequently, children are developing very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is very good. Good teaching ensures that children achieve well and a significant minority exceed these expectations by the time they enter Year 1. A good range of well-prepared resources support learning well. The classroom and outdoor learning area are well organised and provide a safe and secure learning environment. Leadership and management are good and the teacher has a clear vision of how provision might be further improved.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards in mathematics by ensuring that pupils have clear improvement targets.
- Ensure that marking is consistent throughout the school and informs pupils of what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

From average starting points, pupils attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science at the ages of seven and eleven. Provisional results for 2007 indicate a further improvement in standards by the end of year 6, particularly in boys' writing and the higher levels of English overall. Initiatives such as a whole school focus on reading and writing, smaller class sizes, the introduction of interactive whiteboards and recent improvements in the standard of teaching, have all contributed to this. The school has identified mathematics as an area for improvement and has implemented several initiatives to raise standards further. For example, a successful mathematics library allows pupils to take games home and practise number skills with their parents. The school is also at the early stages of ensuring all pupils understand their improvement areas within mathematics in order to raise standards. Pupils with specific needs make good progress because they receive good support.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are good. For example, good spiritual development and reflection is demonstrated through their display work, 'Learning about God, Creation and the Wonders of the World'. Pupils clearly enjoy school and this is evident in their good attendance. A parent commented, 'Pupils have been given lots of opportunities to give their opinions and take part in a range of enjoyable activities' and this is certainly the case. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to demonstrate responsibility by participating in the school council, becoming peer mediators and by helping to supervise younger pupils at lunchtimes. They also contribute well to the local community through fund raising events and delivering food to older citizens during Harvest time. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, for example, by drinking water and actively participating in after school clubs such as cross-country running and maypole dancing. Zoned spaces in the playground also ensure that pupils remain active. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education as demonstrated by their good standards.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Lessons are planned well to ensure that the needs of pupils are met, including those with specific needs. Pupils make good progress towards the lesson aims. Teachers successfully review pupils' learning at the end of lessons, and this allows pupils to understand what they have achieved. Pupils respond well to teachers' questioning that often encourages them to reflect, explain and justify their thinking. Teachers make good use of resources, especially the interactive whiteboards, to both consolidate learning and motivate the pupils. Teaching assistants provide good support during main activities, but their deployment at the beginning of some lessons could be improved. Teachers' marking is regular and provides positive feedback to pupils; however, teachers do not consistently inform pupils of what they need to do next to improve their work. Throughout the school, pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour make a positive contribution to their learning. High attaining pupils are identified and further challenged in most lessons. This is reflected in the higher levels these pupils attain in national tests. Teachers are beginning to highlight more clearly improvement areas for pupils in mathematics, in order to raise standards.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school is continuing to introduce some topic-based work in all year groups to ensure that pupils' apply their skills in different contexts. Teaching literacy skills through different subjects has been a priority for the school and has helped to lift standards. Boys have benefited in particular because they see more meaning to their writing. Special weeks such as 'Take One Picture', have helped to raise the profile of art within school. A range of visits, such as the Year 6 residential trip to the Isle of Wight develops pupils' social skills, confidence and self-esteem. Information, communication and technology (ICT) is used well to enhance the curriculum. For example, a project about the River Nile in geography demonstrates pupils' successful use of various computer programmes. However, there is more to do to systematically assess and track pupils' skills in ICT. A range of additional programmes, effectively help pupils with specific needs in English and mathematics to make good progress.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Child protection procedures are well known by staff and rigorously applied, and the school provides a safe and healthy environment for pupils. The school receives good support from outside agencies to meet pupils' needs. A strong personal, social and health education programme enables pupils to have a good knowledge of how to stay well and keep safe. Pupils say they would be happy to approach a teacher if they had any concerns. Supervision around the school is good and pupils respond positively to the praise and encouragement they receive. Systems to give pupils additional responsibilities such as peer mediators are successful.

The schools tracking systems have recently been further developed to identify pupils' needs and track progress over time. Learning targets are set in literacy. However, pupils are less confident when discussing their improvement areas in mathematics because the setting of

targets is at a very early stage of development. Pupils with specific needs are supported well by support staff, are regularly assessed and work is targeted well to meet their needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The impact of senior leaders is good as demonstrated by pupils' good progress. The school's self-evaluation is secure and senior leaders have set challenging targets based on a good understanding of pupils' progress. Recently improved tracking systems are used by senior leaders to keep a close check on pupils' progress. These are regularly reviewed with individual class teachers and, consequently, are helping to raise standards.

The literacy and mathematics managers are enthusiastic and very active in their areas. There is a good focus on standards because they monitor teaching and learning, coach other members of staff as well as carry out work scrutiny. Moreover, they are well informed about strengths and weaknesses in the areas they lead. For example, the literacy manager has put many effective strategies in place, and successfully raised standards in writing, particularly for boys. The mathematics manager is using a whole range of strategies to improve achievement, and these are beginning to bear fruit. However, they have not yet had the required impact.

Governors' contribution to school improvement is good. They are well informed, provide good support and offer challenge to the headteacher when appropriate.

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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?	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 <sup>1</sup> 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2

### 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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sonning CofE Primary School, Reading, RG4 6XF

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for being helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at all your work.

You go to a good school. Here are the reasons why.

- You make good progress and reach above average standards because you have good teaching.
- Those of you who have specific needs progress well because of the good support you receive in your learning from teachers and other adults.
- You have a good curriculum and really enjoy all the extra activities that your school offers you.
- You get on well with each other and your teachers and, as a result, your behaviour is good.
- You have a good understanding of what you need to do to improve your writing and you really like the traffic light system!
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are safe, happy and well looked after.
- The headteacher, deputy and governors work hard on your behalf and provide good leadership.

We believe that, even in a good school like yours, some things can be improved. We think that standards in mathematics can be better. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that when they mark your work, they tell you very clearly, what you need to do to improve. I am sure you are ready for the challenge!

With best wishes for your future success,

Pritiben Patel

Lead Inspector