

Somerlea Park Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112498
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310903
Inspection dates	10–11 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Earnshaw
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Joyce
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2003
School address	Bank Street Somercotes Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 4JE
Telephone number	01773602258
Fax number	01173606802

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school. Almost all pupils are of White British background. A higher than average proportion is eligible for free school meals. Although the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, the proportion with statements of special educational need is above average. There is a small but significant minority of pupils with challenging behaviour. The school has a positive play facility to support pupils with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. In some years, a higher than average proportion of pupils arrive at or leave the school at a time other than the start of the school year. The school is involved in the Swanwick Cluster of Schools and the Primary Sports Coordinator Programme. It hosts a breakfast club for pupils. Staff act as mentors for trainee teachers. The school's work has been recognised by the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Since the last inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. An acting headteacher led the school for two terms before the current headteacher took over in September 2006. There have been many changes in the teaching staff.

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's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, which is how it judges itself. It provides satisfactory value for money. Because there have been so many staffing changes since the last inspection there has been an uneven pace of development, but improvement is satisfactory nonetheless. There are constructive links with community agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities get the support they need. The school has made a number of changes to strengthen its relationship with parents, whose views of the school differ widely. Most are positive about it but a minority have concerns. These concerns were raised with inspectors, who investigated them and found that most, but not all were unfounded.

Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge typical of their age and by the time they leave, standards are average, indicating that their progress and achievement is satisfactory. Because of actions taken in the last two years, standards in English and mathematics have risen. Standards in science have changed little, as this subject has not been a focus for development. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory because the teaching is mainly satisfactory, and sometimes good. Monitoring has enabled the school to form an accurate picture of the overall quality of teaching. However, the school's policy on teaching and learning is out of date and does not provide a comprehensive enough picture of what is expected of teachers. As a result, there are variations in practice and quality.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They say that this is 'an OK school'. Most enjoy coming each day and take part enthusiastically in lessons and other activities, particularly sports, and they eat healthily at school. A few feel uncomfortable in the playground because of the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils. The school is aware of this. With the support of the local authority, it has made a number of suitable changes including the appointment of additional teaching assistants to support pupils with challenging behaviour. Supervision is good and pupils are safe in school. Those with challenging behaviour receive the support that they need to improve and the school is successful in ensuring that they are included in school life. In lessons, behaviour is good. Pupils make a strong contribution to school and the wider community, and they leave school equipped satisfactorily for secondary school.

The work of leaders, managers and governors is satisfactory. The development plan identifies that the school needs to strengthen the roles of subject leaders and governors, and work has begun. Where there has been continuity in subject leadership there have been significant improvements. A lack of assessment information for subjects other than English and mathematics has limited the extent to which the school has been able to evaluate the impact of the curriculum, particularly in science. Nonetheless, the curriculum is satisfactory, with a good range of visitors and extra-curricular opportunities that add to pupils' enjoyment. The school has embarked on the implementation of a national project designed to raise standards and will receive support from the local authority. It has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science so that they match those in English and mathematics.
- Update the teaching and learning policy and implement agreed practice consistently so that all teaching comes up to the best.
- Collect assessment information for all subjects and use this to evaluate the curriculum and inform future planning robustly.

- Train subject leaders and governors to monitor and evaluate the work of the school effectively.

A small proportion of 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

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. When pupils enter the school, standards are broadly average. Staff are working closely with the infants' school to help incoming pupils to maintain their level of skills during the summer holiday. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at the school and standards by Year 6 are similar to the national picture. There has been a small rise in standards in English and mathematics since the last inspection. The key to improvements in the last two years has been the introduction of a robust system for checking the progress made by pupils in these subjects and intervention to support those that fall behind. The school has also introduced a system of target setting for individuals and groups, and this is being further developed this academic year as part of a national project. Science has not been a focus for recent development and standards have changed little.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The school is a calm and friendly place where most pupils develop happy relationships with their teachers and with each other. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Success is recognised and rewarded so pupils grow in self-confidence. They also make healthy lifestyle choices. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, and pupils behave well during lessons. Occasional swearing and anti-social behaviour at playtimes makes a few pupils feel uncomfortable, but there are effective strategies to deal with this. Pupils' behaviour improves during their time at the school, particularly through positive play sessions. Many pupils enjoy learning and work hard. Attendance is average and unauthorised absence has improved as a result of the school's procedures. Pupils take their many responsibilities seriously. They also recycle, raise funds and are involved in community activities. Pupils leave with appropriate basic skills and qualities that will be helpful in secondary school and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and sometimes good. However, the lack of a comprehensive teaching and learning policy results in inconsistencies amongst teachers. Pupils are managed well and three-part lessons are planned to meet individual needs. When tasks are timed there is a sense of urgency and pupils make good progress. Occasionally, teachers spend too much time talking and pupils have too little opportunity to complete the task set. Assessment is satisfactory; it is best in literacy and numeracy, and improving in information and communication technology (ICT). All teachers make sure that pupils know what they are learning in each lesson. Where teachers are clear about how pupils can judge whether or not they have achieved the objectives, pupils are successfully involved in assessing how well they have learned. Most teachers use interactive whiteboards confidently and this adds impact and enjoyment to

whole class teaching. Teaching assistants often work well with groups or individuals and this gives pupils confidence and helps them progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets requirements and is satisfactory overall, although enrichment and extra-curricular activities are good. Curriculum development has been limited by the many changes in subject leadership. However, satisfactory progress is being made in implementing the revised national strategies for literacy and mathematics. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping safe and good opportunities to encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles. The range of learning experiences matches pupil's needs adequately, with opportunities for social and emotional development and positive play. Work is still in progress on a revision of the school's curriculum. School-based themed weeks have been introduced to bring learning to life, but their overall effectiveness has not been evaluated fully. Governors have identified this as an area for improvement and greater accountability. A few parents are concerned that activities are limited. For example, they feel that pupils do not have enough opportunities to visit places of interest. However, themed weeks are starting to bring learning to life and enhance the curriculum well. Pupils say they enjoy them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall, the quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. All pupils are well cared for in school because the staff know them well and are aware of their individual needs and backgrounds. However, there is some inconsistency in the application of school rules by staff which pupils and their parents find both confusing and unfair. The school has reviewed its behaviour policy and follows effective procedures for managing challenging behaviour and dealing promptly with bullying. It works closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the necessary support. Arrangements to ensure pupils' safety are securely in place and understood by all staff.

The secure arrangements for checking progress in literacy and mathematics and intervening to support those who fall behind are not used in science. Consequently, standards in this subject have not improved. The marking of pupils' work, though good at times, does not always provide pupils with clear and concise pointers for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff morale is good and they work effectively together. The headteacher, governors and senior management team have secured improvements in standards, attendance, behaviour, accommodation, staffing, learning resources and support for transition. They set suitably challenging targets for raising achievement, which they came close to meeting this year. They involve staff, pupils and parents in the process of self-evaluation and are responsive to constructive criticism from parents and pupils. However, a lack of data on how well pupils are doing limits the scope of self-evaluation. For instance, the school cannot identify the full impact on standards of considerable investment in ICT provision because it has only recently started to collect assessment information. Governors are supportive and visit the

school to attend events. They recognise that they are not involved well enough in checking the work of the school first-hand and have a suitable plan to address this.

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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	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	3
How well 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 the 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

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 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 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

12 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Somerlea Park Junior School, Somercotes, Alfreton, Derbyshire. DE55 4JE

Thank you for making us welcome in your school, especially to those who talked to us about school life. We enjoyed our visit.

We found your school was mostly a calm and happy place where people get on well with each other. You are doing well enough in English and mathematics as your progress has improved since you have been working towards your targets. Most of you behave well in lessons and are keen to learn. We were sorry to hear that a few of you feel uncomfortable in the playground. We watched this carefully and saw that there were plenty of adults around who made sure that nobody came to any harm. We found out that the staff have done quite a few things to help to make you feel safer. In our judgement you are generally safe in school. We were impressed with how you choose healthy snacks and take plenty of exercise. You also take on lots of responsibilities such as monitors, 'buddies', team captains and school councillors. You think of others and the environment when you help to recycle, raise funds and join in with community activities. We found that the school does listen to what you and your parents say. We could see that most of you really enjoy school life and your attendance has certainly improved, so well done!

Some of you said that some things are unfair and we did find that a few staff are not clear about school rules. There are lots of ways in which the school recognises good work and behaviour and you are praised when you have done well. Staff also take good care of you and know you well. They are working hard to improve the school and know that some things need to be changed.

They are going to:

- help you all to make better progress in science
- agree to have a similar approach to teaching so that all lessons are good ones
- make sure that they measure your progress in every subject so that they can find out what sort of lessons and activities help you learn best
- make sure that all staff and governors check on the work of the school.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector