

South Stanley Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114030
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311457
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christine Weightman
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Kemp
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Tyne Road South Stanley Stanley County Durham DH9 6PZ
Telephone number	01207 232445
Fax number	01207 290823

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves an area of substantial social and economic disadvantage and is situated to the north of Durham. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils come from White British backgrounds. Some Key Stage 1 pupils are taught in mixed age classes and there is a separate, newly developed Foundation Stage Unit for Nursery and Reception children. The headteacher has been in post for one year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

South Stanley Infant and Nursery is a satisfactory school with good provision and progress in the Foundation Stage. Under the visionary leadership of the new headteacher, good improvements have taken place recently. Parents have confidence in the school and say it is an 'asset to the community'. There is much praise for the staff who they describe as 'approachable and supportive'. The school works in very challenging circumstances and is responsive to local needs. Good links with outside agencies provide many benefits for pupils' medical, emotional and learning needs, as well as help for families.

When the low starting point to school is considered, academic achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average, however, and need to rise. Some good improvements in writing are evident, but Year 2 pupils are not secure in their knowledge of sounds and letters and make too many mistakes with spelling. Number work is satisfactory but pupils' skills of solving problems and applying their understanding of shape, measures and data work are limited.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but the proportion of good lessons is not yet high enough for the school to meet its own targets for improving standards. Planning has been improved to provide a good level of challenge and support to meet most pupils' needs. However, the element of challenge is not always high enough to ensure that pupils meet their potential. Although subject managers have a satisfactory overview of provision and standards, their role is not sufficiently developed; at present, the monitoring of new initiatives is not effective enough to ensure that these are implemented consistently and are having the desired impact. The curriculum is satisfactory and includes a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education. The Healthy Schools and Activemark awards recognise the good work done to help pupils live safe and healthy lives.

Personal development, including behaviour, is satisfactory. Adults provide a secure environment and most pupils say they enjoy learning. They make a sound contribution to the school community. For example, the new pupil council ensures that pupils' views are known, and 'buddies' help to make playtimes run smoothly. Such experience of responsibility prepares them soundly for life in the wider world.

Good leadership from the new headteacher has enabled the school to identify the weaknesses that have kept standards low in the past. Effective strategies have been introduced to improve provision and increase pupils' progress. The full impact of the work is not yet evident in the teacher assessments at Year 2 although progress in the Foundation Stage has improved. With these initial successes, managers and teachers are eager to move on and there is good capacity for the school to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good. Children's skills and knowledge at entry to Nursery are well below those typical for their age group. They make good progress in all areas of learning and especially so in communication, language and personal skills, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the Reception year an improving number are now meeting the level expected for their age, but most are just below.

The improved progress results from the development of a new Foundation Unit where management and teamwork are good. Children are grouped with a key worker which helps

them to feel secure and also facilitates good communications between home and school. They have the benefit of good teaching and an inviting and stimulating learning environment. Activities are planned at different levels of difficulty, providing children with the support or challenge they need in order to progress quickly. They learn new skills and knowledge in the adult-directed groups and are encouraged to explore their world and become independent through an exciting range of free choice activities. Children are enthusiastic about their learning. A major strength in the Foundation Unit lies in the provision for pupils who need extra help. Specialist support and resources are very effective in boosting development in speech, social and physical skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the proportion of good teaching in Key Stage 1 to ensure that pupils are provided with a sufficient level of challenge at all times.
- Improve subject management in Key Stage 1 to ensure that new initiatives are consistently implemented and embedded.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of under-performance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is beginning to improve and is now satisfactory, but standards are below average by the end of Year 2. When pupils enter Year 1, their development is below national expectations.

The school's development plan focuses sharply on improving learning and raising standards. Teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is helping to overcome the underachievement that has been evident for some pupils in previous years.

Pupils are confident speakers and many write at length, using interesting vocabulary and basic punctuation. Some of the work however, is spoiled by inaccurate spelling and poorly formed handwriting. Number work is satisfactory but skills of problem solving and investigation are less secure. There is insufficient evidence of pupils applying their skills, for example in measuring or shape work. Girls are doing better than boys although the school is working hard to improve the situation. Teachers choose books and topics that interest boys, for example, the 'space station' role play areas are popular. As a result of good support in class, pupils who have additional learning or emotional needs are enabled to make equal progress to the majority. Pupils with summer birthdays generally have less time in Nursery. Although their standards are lower by Year 2, their rate of progress is broadly equal to the majority.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social education is satisfactory. Their understanding of different cultures within society, however, is not as well developed. Pupils appreciate the good things that school offers them and have positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils with emotional difficulties cope well with the conventions of school life, mainly due to the good support provided. Rules are understood and followed; they are underpinned through an established system of rewards and sanctions.

Pupils say they feel safe and that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with. They know about healthy lifestyles, including the importance of taking regular exercise and choosing nourishing food. In class discussions they are encouraged to think through situations and make sensible choices. The newly established school council is developing pupils' role in decision making. Attendance is below average but improving. Staff and outside agencies do all they can to stress the importance of, and encourage, regular attendance and good punctuality.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although some good lessons take place in Key Stage 1, the proportion of good teaching is not yet high enough to improve standards. Many worthwhile improvements are being made in teaching but not all are routinely implemented. In most lessons, tasks are planned to support and challenge pupils of all abilities and help them meet their new, challenging targets. However, on occasions, some average ability and more able pupils are not extended enough. Planning is based around clear objectives but these are not always on display during lessons to remind pupils what is expected of them.

Introductions and review sessions in some lessons have a fast pace and include a good amount of interaction so they enthuse and motivate pupils. On occasions, however, pupils listen passively for too long and their concentration begins to drift. The quality of marking often includes helpful advice for pupils but occasionally it consists mainly of ticks with little indication of what is good or needs further attention. Expectations in terms of presentation vary and too often, teachers accept poor handwriting or work that is untidy. Experienced teaching assistants successfully support progress, especially for pupils who need extra help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and includes a strong emphasis on personal education. Teachers in Key Stage 1 are currently exploring ways of linking subjects together in order to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and mathematical skills. At the moment information and communication technology (ICT) is not widely used to support learning but new laptop computers have been bought to provide more frequent 'hands-on' sessions for pupils. A good range of special teaching groups help pupils who need extra support but little is in place for the more able or gifted pupils to boost their learning or develop talents.

There is sound enrichment for the curriculum through a range of after-school activities, visits and visitors. Pupils have regular opportunities to engage with the community and links with other schools help to broaden their experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect is satisfactory with strengths in the pastoral care provided for pupils. Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work. Well supported by outside experts, firm and effective strategies to manage unacceptable behaviour are in place. As a result, the rate of exclusion is low and the school has a productive working atmosphere. Good links with social, educational

and medical agencies support children and their families well. Safeguarding measures, including child protection strategies, meet requirements.

Satisfactory guidance is provided for pupils' academic progress. Teachers provide feedback during lessons but little of this is written down for future reference. New 'goals for learning' are ready to be introduced but as yet, pupils have limited advice to help them improve their work over the long term.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher provides good leadership and is driving the school forwards successfully. She is instrumental in maintaining the caring ethos and is well regarded by parents and governors. Issues from the past have been fully recognised and acted upon. As a result, provision and progress in the Foundation Stage are good and Reception children are working at a higher level of development than in previous years.

Improvements in teaching and the checking of pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 has led to higher expectations of what they can achieve. However, these measures have not yet had time to be wholly effective. A programme for monitoring teaching and provision in English and mathematics has been introduced. However, the subject managers' role is not developed well enough to ensure that new initiatives are being routinely implemented and that tasks consistently include enough challenge.

Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met. With the recruitment of new members, governors have introduced a committee structure so they can deal with business more efficiently. They fully recognise the need to extend their monitoring role, especially in relation to standards, achievement and the curriculum.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Stanley Infant and Nursery School, Durham, DH9 6PZ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we visited your school. We appreciated all the help you gave us and the interesting conversations we had. In return, I would like to tell you what we discovered.

South Stanley Infant and Nursery provides you with a sound start to your education. There have been some really good improvements this year. The children in the Foundation Stage have lots of fun in their learning and are making good progress, especially with their early reading and writing. We enjoyed watching some of you digging in the soil and mud. We were impressed with the care you took when handling worms and the small creatures that you found. That shows how thoughtful you are.

Those of you in Years 1 and 2 have worked hard to improve your writing skills - well done! There is still some work to do however. For example, you are using interesting words and correct punctuation but sometimes the spelling and handwriting isn't too good. You can work accurately with numbers but are not quite so confident when it comes to solving problems or doing more practical tasks, such as collecting data and making graphs. I have suggested that the staff make sure that the work set for you is not too easy and not too hard! You have good attitudes to learning so I am sure you will enjoy the new challenges that your teachers are planning to introduce.

Please thank your parents for sending lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are very pleased with the school. They think it is a friendly place and say your teachers are 'fantastic'.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had. Your headteacher and her staff have some exciting plans to make your learning even more interesting. I have suggested that they keep a close eye on all the things they are doing, to make sure that you do as well as possible. I think you will especially enjoy using the new laptop computers. Please accept my best wishes for the future and keep up the hard work!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector