

Sopley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115948
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312120
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jo Curd

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	102
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	15
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Mail
Headteacher	Mr Martin Sheret
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	South Ripley Bransgore Christchurch BH23 8ET
Telephone number	01425 672343
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small very rural Primary School has a very varied intake. About 75 per cent of pupils do not live near to the school. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or have English as an additional language. A very small proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Although the proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, the proportion of pupils who have statements to support their special educational needs is higher. Plans to improve and extend accommodation are currently under discussion.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well in their learning and personal development. Pupils and parents appreciate its friendly, caring, inclusive ethos. One pupil said, 'Everyone is friends with each other,' whilst a parent commented, 'It is a very welcoming and friendly school, the children across all the different age groups know each other well and look after each other very well.'

Good leadership from the headteacher ensures that the school's work is evaluated frankly and astutely. Improvement since the last inspection, particularly since the appointment of the experienced and able new senior teacher last year, is good. All areas identified for development have been tackled well. Thorough and accurate self-evaluation and a strong commitment to school development have led to improvements including increased levels of achievement, more effective staff deployment, better use of accommodation and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. A new temporary classroom currently used for the oldest pupils has enabled leaders and managers to reorganise classes in the school's main building. They are now making good use of satisfactory accommodation, although space for small group work, a library and active independent learning is very limited. The school's development plan is succinct and well focussed on raising standards and achievement. This successfully helps leaders and managers to tackle priorities and focus on the impact that decisions and actions have for all pupils. For example, a recent emphasis on writing has successfully raised achievement. Mathematics is correctly identified as the school's current focus for development, as improvements here have not yet raised achievement to the good levels seen elsewhere. Good links with parents and significant members of the local community, family events organised by the 'Friends Association' and special days where pupils of different ages work together all add to community cohesion and the 'family feel' of the school in this very rural and sparsely populated area.

Children start in the Reception Class with a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience. The small cohorts mean that these also vary considerably between year groups but, overall, these tend to be slightly below those expected for this age. Due to effective provision, all the children make good progress and standards are generally in line with those expected by the end of the Reception year. Successful work to raise standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 means that standards at the end of Year 6 are now above average.

Pupils are friendly, confident and well behaved. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe by eating fruit and vegetables, being active, doing as they are asked and being considerate towards others. They say that the school is 'happy and everyone enjoys it.' They are well involved in their school community through the school council, helping with tasks and looking after younger pupils in the playground. Although they are generally keen to learn, in some lessons tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to individual needs. On these occasions, there are too few opportunities for pupils to work independently and pupils are expected to sit for too long before they do things for themselves, which slows their progress. In addition, inconsistencies in the way work is marked mean that they are not always sufficiently clear of what they need to learn next. Overall, however, good behaviour, attitudes and achievement stand them in good stead for later life and learning.

The dedication of staff and governors, their effective partnership with most parents, the willing cooperation of pupils and the schools successful record of development all indicate that capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are well looked after, cared for and supported in this small Reception Class. Provision is good because the leader is experienced and very committed. There are good links with parents and the community and the children often benefit from the attention and help of students and other volunteers. The good balance between child chosen and adult led activities contributes well to their independence, choice and learning. Due to good teaching and a broad practical curriculum the children make good progress to reach standards that are broadly in line with those expected of this age. Current accommodation is satisfactory and opportunities for play indoors and out have improved since the last inspection. However, space is still limited and opportunities for children to move between indoors and out are fairly restricted.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' individual needs and that they understand what they need to learn next.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards vary greatly within and between the small cohorts. The school has worked successfully to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress and, as a result, standards by the end of Year 6 are now above average. This represents a good level of achievement and the school's tracking shows that all groups of pupils make good progress. Improvements in provision have resulted in increased achievement in English, particularly writing. Achievement in mathematics remains satisfactory because the subject has received less attention so far. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities or who find learning more difficult achieve well because they are supported well in class and intervention groups although space for these is limited. Pupils who learn more quickly or easily are challenged by the high expectations of staff, but do not always have sufficient opportunities for independent or more active learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident, polite and friendly. Behaviour is good and nearly all the pupils are keen to learn. Relationships are good and pupils enjoy school. Despite the school's highly concerted efforts to improve attendance, rates remain below the national average mainly due to illness and holidays during term time. Pupils have a strong sense of pride and involvement. Older pupils look after the young ones and they all contribute their ideas through the school council and pupil surveys. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Religious Education, assemblies and the range of individuals in the school contribute to pupils' good and growing respect for diversity. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy through eating fruit and vegetables and staying active. They know how to stay safe by walking sensibly when on outings and acting considerately towards each other. Because of good achievement, behaviour and attitudes they are all well prepared for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning are now contributing to the good achievement of all pupils. The recent appointment of two experienced teachers has successfully brought new skills to the school and particularly contributed to improvements in writing and information and communication technology. Relationships are good and pupils behave well. They are particularly enthusiastic about visits out which they enjoy and learn a lot from. Planning is good and all teachers are well prepared. Teaching assistants are usually deployed well to support pupils who find learning more difficult or challenging. Although teachers vary tasks within each class these are not always sufficiently well matched to individual learning styles or needs. Although pupils are keen to learn, some are less engaged when they are insufficiently active. This inevitably slows their achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad, engaging, relevant curriculum contributes well to pupils' achievement and enjoyment. Information and communication technology (ICT) has developed greatly since the last inspection. The school now has a designated suite of new computers, which pupils use regularly to support and extend various subjects. The curriculum is enriched well through clubs, outings, visitors and special events. Pupils enjoyed 'Outdoor Week,' when they successfully cooperated in a number of outdoor challenges and crafts, and trips to an Egyptian exhibition and local water works, very much. Helping to grow vegetables in the school's polytunnel and eating these for school lunch contributes well to pupils' awareness of diet and health. Planning for mathematics has received less attention and is less well developed. Consequently, achievement here is satisfactory. Religious education, assemblies and early links with a school in Nepal pupils all help prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All pupils are cared for and supported well. Warm relationships throughout the school contribute well to their enjoyment and achievement. There are good links with parents and most feel, as one put it, 'Any query or concerns, no matter how small have been dealt with swiftly and effectively with a kindness shown.' Another spoke appreciatively about the way some initial difficulties with her son starting school had been dealt with saying, 'Now my son loves going to Sopley School'. Systems to ensure the health and safety of pupils are securely in place. The reorganisation of accommodation has increased opportunities for support and intervention groups but space for these is still limited. Although work is usually marked conscientiously and pupils are set targets for their learning, inconsistencies between subjects and classes mean that pupils do not always know what they need to learn next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management have resulted in noticeable improvements in the school. Leaders have reorganised the staffing structure and appointed new personnel. They have seized opportunities to appoint experienced, skilled staff who have already contributed well to areas that the school needed to develop. These key changes to the staffing structure have contributed well to improvements in the quality of teaching, support of pupils and achievement overall. Although the current focus on mathematics has improved provision, the impact of this is not yet fully evident in pupils' achievement in that subject. Strong teamwork and a climate of commitment and trust contributes well to the caring and inclusive ethos of the school and pupils' achievement and personal development. The role of subject leaders has improved since the last inspection. They are now actively involved in monitoring and developing provision and are developing a good understanding of standards and achievements in their subjects. Despite some current vacancies, Governors are very involved in the school, supporting and challenging decisions and provision very effectively.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

21 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sopley Primary School, Christchurch, BH23 8ET

Thank you for making me feel so welcome in your school when I visited recently. I particularly enjoyed having my lunch with some of you and hearing about your trips to the museum and to the water works. Thank you for telling me so much about your school, this really helped me with my work.

I agree with you that you have a good school and can see why most of you really enjoy being there. You are kind to each other and enjoy looking after each other, particularly in the playground. You are all learning a lot and make good progress especially in English. Although progress in mathematics is satisfactory, it is not yet as good as other subjects. You behave well and most of you are keen to learn. Occasionally work is a bit too difficult for some of you and some find it hard to concentrate for long, especially if you have to keep still and listen. Although the new temporary room for class 3 and room changes for other classes has provided more space, this is still fairly limited. I know that you find your targets for writing and mathematics helpful. These are currently clearer and used more in some classes than others. Marking shows how well you do with your work but does not always show you how to improve or develop further.

I have therefore asked all your staff to do two things to improve your school further. These are to:

- help you achieve even more in mathematics
- make sure that work is suitable and not too easy or difficult and that you all know how to improve and develop your work further.

Perhaps you could help by continuing to work hard and telling your teachers when you find something particularly helpful for your learning.

Thank you again for all your help. With best wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely

Jo Curd

Lead Inspector