

Solent Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116199
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	312211
Inspection date	28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Boshier
Headteacher	Mrs S D Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Eveleigh Road Farlington Portsmouth PO6 1DH
Telephone number	023 9237 1073
Fax number	023 9238 2606

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and investigated:

- how well teaching, leadership and the curriculum meet the needs of pupils, particularly higher attainers
- how pupils benefit from the academic support and guidance provided by the school
- how the school judges the impact of its work.

The inspector gathered evidence from an analysis of information and data about pupils' achievement provided by the school, observations of parts of lessons, scrutiny of parents' questionnaires and other documents, and discussions with the headteacher, other managers, and pupils. The inspector did not investigate other aspects of the school's work in detail, but found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These judgements have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average infant school. Pupils come from a predominantly White British background. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average. This group consists mainly of slow learners. There are four pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school is recognised nationally through awards such as those for Healthy Schools and Basic Skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

There is a justifiable pride in this school. One parent echoed the views of others when writing that it is, 'a lovely, welcoming school. It has a friendly atmosphere and the children have lots of opportunities to further their skills and knowledge through a wide range of outside resources'. The school provides a good education for its pupils, and has a number of outstanding features such as the personal development, care, guidance and support for pupils, and the curriculum. It is extremely well led by the experienced headteacher, who provides a very clear direction for the school's development.

Over the last two years, in the national tests at the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been well above average. Given the above average starting points of these pupils in Year 1, this reflects good achievement. This includes those who are slow learners. In the current Year 2 there is a wider spread of ability. However, these students are on track to attain similar standards. In 2007, the number of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics and writing disappointed the school. New measures, such as introducing further opportunities to make learning more practical and further increasing the chance for boys to write, are having a positive impact.

The achievement levels result from consistently good teaching, careful tracking of pupils' progress, and the establishment of a stimulating learning environment, to which pupils respond eagerly. Pupils are prepared to become involved in lessons because teachers establish very good relationships, and an environment in which pupils feel that their views are valued. Some good use of time targets, good regular discussion opportunities, and a mix of activities that meet different learning styles, help motivate pupils in lessons. As one parent wrote, 'They always talk about what they are doing in school - the teachers seem to make it very motivating and real.' On occasions, teachers plan learning aims that are insufficiently specific enough. This results in missed opportunities for pupils to be clear about what level of learning is expected of them as individuals.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their education, have very positive attitudes to learning and behave extremely well. Their outstanding personal development is reflected in their excellent knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe. They are well able to apply their knowledge in different contexts. One pupil pointed at the physical education apparatus and said, excitedly, 'We use those, but with mats, and we have to bend our knees when we jump and land.' The newly established school council, which is looking into environmental improvements, is one example of the pupils' good contribution to the community. Pupils are well prepared for the next step in their education through their good basic skills. They also benefit from the school's well organised management of, and approach to, information and communication technology (ICT). The pupils have good opportunities to practise their ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum.

The outstanding curriculum provides a very wide range of opportunities for pupils and contributes significantly to their achievement and high enjoyment levels. One parent wrote, 'My daughter says she always enjoys school, as much as it is possible to do.' The curriculum meets the literacy and numeracy needs of pupils very well. Learning becomes more real for pupils through such approaches as asking pupils to imagine what it is like to be blind, prior to investigating the life of Louis Braille. Pupils benefit extremely well from the very wide range of additional activities they are provided with, including theme weeks, visits, visitors and clubs. 'The activities from outside, circus skills, farm visits and sports stimulate the children, teaching

them new skills while they greatly enjoy themselves', wrote one parent. The circus skills lessons are obviously enjoyed. Additional activities, such as a young person's university, help provide good opportunities for pupils with specific gifts and talents.

The school adopts a very rigorous approach to the pastoral care of pupils. Staff training in first aid and child protection procedures is extremely thorough. Not surprisingly, parents and pupils spoke of the school being a safe and secure environment. The pastoral care, guidance and support of pupils are enhanced by careful and well thought out approaches to the academic support for pupils. Pupils spoke of the helpfulness of teachers' feedback on their work. They have literacy and numeracy targets and use them well to improve their work.

Leadership and management of the school are good. A parent wrote, 'There is a strong sense of leadership at the school.' The headteacher has led the school extremely well, and consistently well above average standards are maintained. Staff clearly share her vision. There is no air of complacency, with demanding targets set for school performance. Learning support assistants are used extremely well to support pupils' learning. The excellent range of outside partnerships benefit pupils, not least the other schools that provide specialist-sporting opportunities. Teamwork is strong, and all managers participate in the well-established procedures for monitoring and evaluating their area of responsibility. The impact of such monitoring is inconsistent because some managers do not evaluate in sufficient depth, or use measurable criteria against which to judge improvement. In other areas, such as ICT and literacy, very detailed development plans exist for the subject. Governors visit the school regularly and benefit well from the experience of the long-serving chair. There is a good capacity to improve the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

'My daughter is in Reception, and I cannot believe how well she's doing. She looks forward to school so much that she moans at weekends and holiday times.' This parent echoes the views of many, and reflects the outstanding start the children get during their Reception year. Overall, the children enter Reception with slightly above the expected levels of skills and knowledge for their age; approximately a third are higher. They achieve very well and leave with the majority having exceeded their learning goals. This progress results not only from the consistently high level of teaching and on-going assessment of children's progress, but also from the motivation provided by the outstanding curriculum. In particular, the children's learning is extremely well reinforced because of the links made between subjects. A topic about celebrations involved children in investigating the clothing of different cultures, food and religious celebrations. The personal development of children is outstanding. They have very good opportunities to take decisions about their learning, settle quickly to their work and quickly become more independent. A thorough and successful review of the area has taken place as a prelude to the recent Investors in Children Award, and has led to the improved involvement of parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers plan learning objectives which encourage pupils to focus on what learning is expected of them as individuals.
- Ensure that all subject leaders carry out detailed analysis when evaluating their areas of responsibility and use measurable success criteria to inform their decisions about improvement.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
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

12 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Solent Infant School, Portsmouth, PO6 1DH

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school. You were eager to talk to me about your school, and I listened carefully to you. I agree with you that your school is good. I also feel that it does some outstanding things. This means that in some areas of its work it does very well indeed. For example, it cares for you very well. You told me that you feel very safe and that the adults listen to you.

Another outstanding area is the way the school helps you develop as young people. For example, you have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. You told me, and I saw for myself, that you behave extremely well, are polite and care for each other. Well done!

You do well in your schoolwork because you receive good teaching. I liked the way you have chances to talk to each other about your work during lessons. You told me that you like the way teachers talk to you about, and help you improve, your work. I have asked your teachers to make very clear to you what learning is expected of you during lessons. You can help by telling the teachers if you find the work too easy or too difficult.

You also told me that you enjoy the many things you have to do in school. I also think this is outstanding. Your clubs, visits and especially the theme weeks you have are really good. Your circus skills are developing well, and you obviously enjoyed the lessons!

Your headteacher leads the school very well. She is well supported by the other adults in the school. This includes your very experienced chair of governors, who knows the school well. I have asked that the teachers who lead subjects look even more carefully at their areas of responsibility so that they have a better idea of how things can improve.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector