

Singlewell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118479
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312955
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Field
Headteacher	Michelle Brown
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	Mackenzie Way Gravesend DA12 5TY
Telephone number	01474 569859
Fax number	01474 327466

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data and the school's own records of pupils' attainment, meetings with members of staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of the school's documentation and pupils' work, observation of the school at work and analysis of the parents' responses to questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small number from other backgrounds. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school after the normal point of entry. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is broadly average. The school has recently renewed its Investor in People status and received the Healthy School and Platinum Travel Plan awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Singlewell Primary School is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils make good academic progress because they enjoy learning and benefit from consistently good teaching through the school. They are keen to speak about their favourite subjects and even the youngest pupils understand how well they are learning and how this will help them in the future. Teachers' eagerness infectiously engages pupils in lessons. One pupil commented, 'I like school because the teachers are enthusiastic about learning. There are lots of different clubs to go to. I hate being ill.' Teachers use the new interactive whiteboards well to bring learning to life by illustrating points or using relevant video clips to stimulate and challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils' information and communication technology skills are good because computers are used well as learning tools. Pupils develop their oral and presentation skills very well when they share what they do in lessons with other classes, for example in recent presentations and displays of science across the school. Pupils take care with their written work and are aware of the level they reach because work is marked carefully and identifies achievement as well as how to improve the next piece.

The school monitors pupils' progress closely so that any pupil beginning to fall behind is picked up quickly and given individual support or joins a 'booster' group to improve attainment in literacy or numeracy. Standards vary from year to year, depending on the capabilities of each group, but are often significantly above national averages in teachers' assessments in Year 2 and in the Year 6 tests. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points, given that a proportion of pupils joining the school in the last few years of their primary schooling have significant emotional or learning difficulties. Pupils' reading standards are higher than those in writing, particularly as pupils move through the school, and so a current development focus is to improve writing. Teachers are helping pupils to identify their next steps more precisely and by using the context of their experiences in other subjects as the starting point for different types of writing.

Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum. They talk about their enjoyment of subjects like history and geography and the range of visits and visitors encourages their understanding of being part of a wider community. They are very aware of how to stay healthy and safe because of their work in science and physical education.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher give excellent leadership and inspire the staff, so that there is a strong commitment to achieving high standards and giving pupils the best possible care. Pupils respond very well to adults' high expectations and show this in their exemplary behaviour and high levels of attendance. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent summed up the views of many, 'Strong teaching, a culture of respect for both children and school personnel, and an ethos of getting children to try hard.'

Parents value the importance placed on the needs of the individual and of the support for the family. The excellent relationships between home and school are a result of the strength of teamwork between all staff and the school's successful involvement with a wide range of external agencies to provide additional expertise and support when needed. A parent illustrated this when writing, 'The staff are such lovely people. They always have time for you and sort out any problems or concerns so that you come away from the school with a smile on your face.' Pupils are emotionally and physically safe in school because they always have an adult to talk to and the few problems which do occur are sorted out quickly. This makes a major

contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils have an exceptionally positive approach to all school activities, for example taking part in many extra-curricular clubs covering a wide range of interests. Their involvement in sporting and musical activities, in addition to many others catering for different interests, contributes very successfully to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy helping others, for example as 'play buddies', managing the drinks trolley at break or raising funds for the school's chosen charity to support a school in Zambia. Pupils' views are valued, for example through the work of the school council. Pupils appreciate the new play equipment organised by the council and are looking forward to the implementation of their designs for further improvements to the playground.

The school's own evaluation of its performance is very robust and an example of how adults continually challenge themselves to do even better. Staff work exceptionally well together, supporting and learning from each other to spread the best practice and, in so doing, provide very good role models for pupils. The school is setting increasingly challenging targets for performance although, because they are aspirational, it sometimes falls short of them. This appears to make adults even more determined to improve aspects of the school's work further because all are committed to giving pupils the best possible quality of education. The school has a good record of improving aspects of its provision because it identifies weaknesses and addresses them rigorously, giving it a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good provision in the Foundation Stage helps children to find their bearings and settle quickly when they start school, helped greatly by the family atmosphere through the whole school. Older pupils help and support younger children, often encouraging a love of learning by sharing what they do in lessons or reading to them at lunchtime. Children enter the Reception class with a range of pre-school experiences and many have skills that are below the expectations for their age, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and in the early stages of reading and writing. The interesting curriculum and good teaching give children a variety of experiences which helps them to make good progress and become confident learners. They improve their social, language and number skills well although when they join Year 1 some have still not reached the national goals expected of them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the school's plans to improve the teaching of writing in order to raise standards further.

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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	2
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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Singlewell Primary School, Gravesend, DA12 5TY

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited recently. I hope that those of you who were out of school in the afternoon were successful in the tag rugby competition. I very much enjoyed meeting you and finding out about the interesting things you do in school. I said that I would let you know what I had found.

I agree with you that Singlewell is a good school.

- You find learning really interesting and I could see how hard you concentrate when the headteacher and I made short visits to your classrooms.
- The youngest pupils have settled quickly and are learning a lot of new things, such as phonics and shape patterns.
- Teaching is good and this helps you to make good progress.
- You mostly reach higher standards than other pupils of your age do.
- Adults give you an exciting range of clubs and visits and many of you take full advantage of these.
- You are very active at playtimes, particularly enjoying the space on the field, and this helps to keep you healthy.
- Adults take outstandingly good care of you.
- You say that you can always speak to an adult who will help to sort out problems if you are worried and this helps you to feel safe.
- The school council does a good job in helping to make the school an even better place.
- The headteacher and the staff think very carefully about how well the school is doing and take action quickly if they think something needs improving.

I agree with your teachers that the most important thing to do next is to improve your writing further. They will be making your writing targets even clearer to you and giving you more opportunities to practise different kinds of writing in other subjects.

I know that you will continue to work hard to make your school and your parents or carers proud of you. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Helen Hutchings Lead inspector



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Mrs Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector