

Southfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120043
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	313488
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Tyers
Headteacher	Mrs Jen Hazell
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2003
School address	Sandringham Close Oakham Rutland LE15 6SH
Telephone number	01572 723187
Fax number	01572 755847

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. The number on roll has fallen since the last inspection and pupils come from a wider area following the closure of another primary school in the town. When they start in the Reception class, children's skills and experiences are below those expected for the ages, especially in their personal and social skills and aspects of their literacy, language and mathematical skills. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils joining the school other than at the usual time is above average.

The overall proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average and rising. It varies significantly between year groups from none to a third of pupils. The overall proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average but is between a third and a half of each year group in Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils with statements that outline their special educational needs is above average.

There have been a number of changes in staff, including the headteacher, during the last three years and the deputy headteacher took up her post at the start of this term. The school holds the Healthy School and Active Mark awards, and has Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school whose overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This reflects the school's own judgement. It is successfully addressing a legacy of inconsistent teaching and uneven progress, which had led to underachievement in the past. All members of the school community value the positive impact of the headteacher's drive for improvement. Parents speak highly of the school and appreciate the benefit of the changes she has made. She leads the school well and the recent initiatives are beginning to bear fruit. Many staff, at all levels of seniority, are relatively new to their roles and are still developing their leadership skills. Parents are particularly pleased that their children are well cared for and enjoy school, and that the headteacher and staff are very approachable. The school sets itself challenging targets and monitors its progress towards these effectively. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Achievement is satisfactory. Currently, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below average. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress. Many older pupils are making good progress as they make up the lost ground of earlier years when their progress was too slow. Pupils who need support make satisfactory progress because of the additional help they receive. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are managed well and pupils are keen to work with each other and staff. However, although teachers' expectations of the standards pupils can reach have risen, teaching of the more able pupils is still not consistently challenging.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The recent introduction of the Big Write project is helping to improve the quality of pupils' writing. However, the impact of this in raising standards of writing for a range of purposes, in English and other subjects, has yet to be reflected in results. Similarly, pupils are not sufficiently confident in applying investigative and problem-solving skills independently in mathematics and science because their skills have not been developed systematically. Pupils are not always sure of what they need to do to improve their work. Because of this shortcoming in academic guidance, the overall quality of the school's care, support and guidance is satisfactory. In lessons, teachers share with pupils what they expect them to achieve but the focus of these goals is not always sharp enough. Although pupils' work is marked regularly, comments do not typically refer to these goals or the next steps they need to take.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. They behave well in lessons and around the school and have a good understanding of keeping safe and living healthily. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a good range of after-school sporting and other activities. Attendance is above the national average and the school has good systems for checking on absences. Through the school council and their involvement in a variety of local events, pupils make a good contribution to the community. Pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education and future lives is satisfactory. Arrangements for child protection are robust. The school has good links with the community, its partner schools and the local authority.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children settle quickly into the well-organised and welcoming setting where daily routines are well established. Overall, children make satisfactory progress but it is good in the development of their personal and social skills,

and nearly all meet national expectations in this area by the time they move to Year 1. In their communication, language, literary and mathematical development, children make satisfactory progress. Nevertheless, at the end of the Foundation Stage, many children have not yet acquired the knowledge and skills expected in this area or in their mathematical development. More rigorous assessment procedures are helping staff to check children's progress and identify what extra help they need at an earlier stage. The recent introduction of a new scheme for teaching letters and sounds is supporting improvements in children's early reading and writing skills. However, there are some missed opportunities to challenge children, particularly the more able, through questions and extended activities when they are working independently. Staff work well together and maintain good links with parents and carers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching challenges pupils consistently, particularly the more able.
- Develop pupils' writing skills systematically in English and other subjects, and their application of problem-solving and investigative skills in mathematics and science.
- Ensure a consistent and rigorous approach to helping pupils improve the quality their work.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils' achievement has varied in recent years from above to below expectations. Standards dipped to well below average in 2007. This was a relatively small year group with twice as many girls as boys. Boys' results were significantly better than those of the girls, many of whom did not meet their targets. Pupils did not make enough progress because of weak teaching in earlier years. As a result, they did not systematically develop the skills needed in writing, mathematics and science to achieve higher standards. The positive impact of action being taken is demonstrated in the school's tracking systems. These show that many pupils currently in Years 4, 5 and 6 have made good gains in learning in the past year and that differences in standards and progress between boys and girls are no longer significant.

Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 showed that standards were below average. Results in reading were higher than in writing and mathematics. Current action to tackle weaknesses is focusing on breaking down learning into smaller steps so that pupils build more securely on their previous learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their involvement, through class and school councils, in setting the school's expectations for behaviour and establishing agreed routines has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in this area. Pupils get on well with each other and respect other's views. They take good care of equipment and a pride in the well-maintained buildings and grounds. Pupils grow in self-esteem as they take on responsibilities around the school, such as playing in the orchestra, and representing the school in local events. In discussion, pupils say they are keen to come to school and appreciate

the help adults give them. They say that bullying is not a frequent problem in the school, but when it does occur staff respond promptly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The positive impact of effective systems for checking pupils' progress is helping to raise the quality of teaching and learning but this is not yet of a consistently good quality across the school. There is some good practice developing in using information about what pupils know and can do to plan their next steps in learning. However, inconsistencies remain, particularly in the challenge provided for the more able. For example, this shortcoming is reflected in teachers spending too long talking to pupils. Pupils enjoy answering questions and link their ideas together well in teacher-led activities but there are some missed opportunities for them to use and apply existing skills when working independently. On occasions, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils do not achieve the purposes of the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship and, in partnership with other schools in the town, a good range of well-attended sporting and musical activities. Pupils identified as needing additional help have sound individual education plans that identify the areas where they most need support. Links between subjects are developing and older pupils learn a modern foreign language. However, the school has yet to ensure that there is a consistent and systematic approach to developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly in giving them the confidence to apply these successfully in a variety of different situations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is a caring community where pupils feel safe and secure, and are confident in turning to an adult for help when needed. It makes regular checks to ensure the health and safety of adults and pupils, and maintains close links with outside agencies to support pupils who need additional help with their learning or behaviour. The school checks the suitability of adults working with children rigorously. Pupils are increasingly being given responsibility for improving their work through sharing their goals for learning and indicating to teachers their success in meeting these. However, marking does not sufficiently guide pupils as to what they need to do next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Working with staff, governors and the local authority, the headteacher has successfully identified the most pressing needs and put in place realistic plans to tackle these. With the recent appointment of the deputy headteacher, the leadership team is now established and subject leaders, some of whom have recently taken on their roles, are focused on raising standards and

improving the quality of provision. The governing body is supportive of the school and provides sound challenge, particularly in pursuit of school 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?	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	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?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southfield Community Primary School, Oakham LE15 6SH

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited the school earlier this week. I was pleased to hear how much you enjoy coming to school and this shows in your good attendance. I congratulate you on your good behaviour, particularly for those of you who find it difficult to take turns and share, and the way in which you all get on well and support each other. You have a good appreciation of living healthily and enthusiastically take part in a good range of sporting and other after-school activities. A particular 'well done' to the orchestra for accompanying the singing in assemblies so nicely.

The staff take good care of you and make sure the school is bright and welcoming. Most of you are making satisfactory progress but this has not always been the case because teaching has not always been good enough. Your headteacher and the staff are working hard to help you do better and catch up, and many of you have made good progress in the last year. You told me that you feel more involved in learning because your teachers explain what they expect you to do by the end of the lesson and ask you how you got on. That is great to hear. I have asked them to make sure that, when marking your work, they tell you what you need to do next to improve because they do not always do this. They are going to make sure that those of you who can work at the higher levels have more challenging work. For all of you, I think it is important that your teachers make sure that they give you plenty of opportunities to improve your writing. I have also asked them to make sure that in mathematics and science they regularly give you problems to solve and investigations for you to run yourselves.

Your headteacher has made many changes since she came to the school and you have helped her and the staff put these in place through your class councils and school council. I very much hope that you will continue to help to bring about further improvements by working hard in lessons and always doing your best. Keep enjoying school and looking out for each other.

Yours truly

Mike Best

Lead inspector