

South Witham Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120389
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313601
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J D Edie
Headteacher	Mr T Emery
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Water Lane South Witham Grantham Lincolnshire NG33 5PH
Telephone number	01572 767233
Fax number	01572 767926

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Children come from the local village and from a broad range of social backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. There are more pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities than in most other schools of this size. The attainment of children who start in Class 1 varies from year to year, although it is generally just below national expectations. The school has had a high level of staff changes and absence due to illness and maternity leave in the last 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 Witham is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. The headteacher provides good leadership, particularly during a difficult period in its development when standards of attainment dipped. Newly developed procedures are helping the school to gain an accurate view of how well it is doing. These procedures are beginning to improve the quality of education provided by the school and are raising standards. However, they are not developed sufficiently to promote consistently good achievement in each class.

The headteacher has established a strong team ethos. Staff and governors work well together to provide a caring and supportive approach that is valued highly by pupils and their parents. Pupils' attendance is good and they clearly enjoy school. This is reflected in a parent's comment that 'my daughter would live at school if she could as she enjoys it that much!' The school provides a calm, happy working atmosphere and pastoral care is of a high quality, particularly the individual care given by teaching and support staff.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Many make good progress in most lessons because of their enthusiastic approach to learning and the good, occasionally outstanding, teaching. However, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough, especially for older pupils that are more able and overall. Teaching quality is satisfactory. Although recent initiatives are improving pupils' writing, their skills remain weak, particularly in handwriting and their extended written work. Pupils attain average standards overall and an increasing proportion of Year 2 pupils' standards are above expected levels. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities benefit from good quality support and make good progress towards their specific learning targets.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about their school, particularly the interesting range of learning activities and the good range of clubs and visits. They behave well in lessons and around the school. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to express their views and contribute to improving the school, especially the accommodation. Staff work hard to ensure that each pupil is happy, safe and ready to learn. The headteacher has developed a good system for tracking pupils' progress carefully, identifying what needs improving and who needs additional support. Teachers are beginning to use this information to guide their teaching and to develop improvement targets. This is raising standards, although the guidance given by teachers to let pupils know what they have to do to improve their work is not consistently effective.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is focused strongly on raising standards and has planned effectively to achieve this. He and his staff have benefited from good support and guidance from experienced consultants. As a result, he has introduced more rigorous procedures, for example, in assessing pupils' work, that are helping pupils to achieve better. However, aspects of leading and managing subjects are not developed enough, for example in literacy, largely because of staff absence. As a result, subject leaders do not always know if pupils are learning as well as they could in some subjects. An effective team approach, which is given clear leadership by the headteacher, is raising standards and sets the school up well for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in Class 1 have a satisfactory start to their schooling and make satisfactory progress in their learning. They settle happily into the routines of school life and benefit from a well-organised programme of learning activities. Some children have weaknesses in their early language skills and this limits aspects of their progress in this area of learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teamwork between teaching and support staff to encourage children's participation, for example, in role-play activities. Opportunities to extend children's use of a broad range of words and phrases are not always used effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly pupils' skills in handwriting and extended written work.
- Raise the attainment of more able Year 5 and 6 pupils by challenging them consistently to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Extend good practice in helping pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase the involvement of subject leaders in checking how well pupils are achieving in their subjects.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and across Years 1 to 6. Most children attain the levels expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1, although some still have weaknesses in their language and literacy skills. Most pupils build satisfactorily on this in Years 1 and 2 and attain average standards by the end of Year 2, although, because of some good, occasionally outstanding teaching, standards are rising. As a result, more pupils are attaining above average levels. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall and standards of attainment are broadly average, except in writing which is below average. Too few more able Year 6 pupils attain at the higher levels, particularly in writing. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities benefit from effective support from teaching assistants, the learning mentor in lessons and when withdrawn for extra help. They make good progress towards their learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. The school's caring approach is reflected in the high priority given to pupils' personal development. This helps them to enjoy school, get on very well with each other and contribute effectively to the school and wider communities. Their attendance is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They behave well in lessons and out at play without losing a sense of liveliness and fun. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures has improved since the last inspection. They lead healthy lives by taking part energetically in swimming and other physical activities and understand the value of healthy eating. They know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to turn to adults for support

should they have any concerns. Pupils develop their key skills satisfactorily to prepare for the world of work, although too few opportunities limit the use of their information and technology (ICT) skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good and occasionally outstanding features. Teachers prepare and plan thoroughly and manage pupils and resources well. Some use a good range of lively learning activities, for example, using music effectively to reinforce language and number skills. Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to contribute their ideas, although too few use more challenging questions to extend learning. Too often teachers over-direct more able Year 5 and 6 pupils rather than challenging them to apply and extend their skills and knowledge. As a result, they do not always achieve as well as they could or become more independent in their learning. Teachers are beginning to use new initiatives, for example, improving the marking of pupils' work, although these are not yet used consistently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6. It is enriched well through a good range of clubs, visits and links with the local community. Good emphasis is given to developing basic skills, although limited resources for ICT restrict opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to support their learning. Planning is in place to improve this situation. Teachers' plan the curriculum carefully to meet most pupils' different learning needs, and good support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to be included fully. The school is beginning to use a theme-based curriculum to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in a broad range of subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good overall. All staff provide excellent pastoral care, especially to those pupils who have learning difficulties and those with social and emotional concerns. The very good contribution of experienced and knowledgeable teaching assistants and the learning mentor is a key factor in ensuring that pupils are happy in school and are able to focus on their learning. The school meets all current requirements for safeguarding its pupils. Guidance to help pupils improve the standard of their work is improving through the increasing use of pupil improvement targets and opportunities for pupils to check their own work and that of a partner. This helps pupils to take on a more independent approach to learning and to gain a deeper insight into what they need to do better. These procedures are not yet consistently effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The good leadership of the headteacher is providing the school with a clear direction and is beginning to raise standards. With some good external support and guidance, he has overcome staffing difficulties and established a very strong team approach in which all staff feel valued and keen to contribute their ideas. They have introduced new procedures that are helping the school to understand better, how well it is doing. The increasingly effective use of these procedures to check the progress of each pupil is enabling the school to set challenging targets for year-on-year improvement. These procedures are beginning to raise standards. Governors work closely with the head and his staff. They are very supportive and some monitor aspects of the school's work, although their role in checking and evaluating how well the school is doing is not sufficiently rigorous. The contribution of some subject leaders is not developed enough, largely because of staff absence in key subjects. The headteacher has planned to improve subject leaders' understanding of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning within their subjects.

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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	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	2

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?	2

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

29 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of South Witham Community Primary School, Grantham, NG33 5PH

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with most of your parents, you think that it is a happy and friendly school - and I agree.

I was pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is good and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to the school council about how they are helping to improve the school. They have some good ideas, such as improving the playground equipment, and clearly enjoy being responsible.

You told me that you really enjoy your work, especially the many interesting activities and the different visits and visitors. I think that many of you learn well, and I have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities in lessons to challenge pupils in Years 5 and 6 who are particularly good at their work. Mr Emery and his staff are trying to help you learn as well as possible. I agree with them that you could do even better in your writing. It is pleasing to note that work on this has already started. I think that you need to write more so that you can get really good at it and try to make sure that your handwriting in English and in other subjects is as good as it is in your handwriting books.

Some of you are getting a better understanding of how to improve your work and are keen to achieve your learning targets. I have asked the teachers to help all of you to understand what you need to do to improve your work. I have also asked your school to provide more opportunities for teachers who are responsible for particular subjects to see where they can help you achieve even better.

Thank you again for helping me to find out about your school and I hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Colin Henderson Lead Inspector