

Silverstone Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121883
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314132
Inspection date	31 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila King
Headteacher	Julie Letts
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
School address	Silverstone Towcester NN12 8US
Telephone number	01327 857351
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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: current achievement and standards, the school's response to the gender imbalance, progress towards developing individual targets for pupils, the pupils' cultural development, and the work of governors. Evidence was collected from observing lessons, looking at pupils' work, and discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils and chair of governors. Pupils' progress was monitored using school data and the views of parents collected through questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the lead 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 a smaller-than-average school. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Boys significantly outnumber girls in the Reception class and Year 2. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school is federated with the village junior school. The two schools share a headteacher and governing body but hold separate budgets.

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, with outstanding features. It fully deserves its good reputation. Comments from parents such as, 'It provides a fantastic start to education,' and 'There's always a supportive and encouraging atmosphere,' are fully justified. The strong focus on promoting children's personal and social skills in the school's effective Foundation Stage is built upon very well as pupils continue in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. It is particularly noticeable on entering the school how well pupils get on with each other, playing and working maturely together and behaving exceptionally well. Pupils are polite and confident. When asked why they were eating carrots at break time rather than chocolate, a number of pupils chorused, 'Because we are a healthy school and they're good for you.'

Pupils enjoy being at school and this is reflected in the high levels of attendance. They say the best things about the school are the 'brilliant teachers who know everything' and 'the fun learning'. The pupils' well-developed literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills make them very well prepared for the future and the next stage of their education. Pupils care about each other and take responsibilities very seriously, whether acting as 'Buddies', members of the Eco committee or carrying out everyday responsibilities such as safely putting away equipment after assembly.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are above average. All pupils achieve well and make good progress in relation to where they started their education. Although the large majority of children join the school at the expected levels, there is often a wide range of ability in each year group. However, staff keep a careful eye on the progress of all pupils to ensure that everyone does as well as they can.

These many strengths explain why the school is popular with pupils and parents. The main reason for the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. She provides a clear direction and works tirelessly for both the infant and junior schools. Other staff support her well and they form an effective team. As a result, pupils achieve well and develop exceptional personal skills. The school has a good understanding of where it is and what it needs to do to get even better. Recent successes in improving the provision for ICT and the strong focus on becoming a 'Healthy School' indicate that the school is well set to develop further. Governors play a very important role with their energetic support and challenge to the school but they are not sufficiently involved in the school's self-evaluation processes.

Effective teaching means that pupils learn at a good rate. Lessons are enjoyable and fun. Just before Year 1 pupils began their 'jobs', they were asked to 'Give your hands a shake because they're going to do some hard work.' Teachers have high expectations in terms of pupils' academic performance and behaviour. Well-planned group work and good support provided by teaching assistants enable pupils to work at a good pace. Although boys outnumber girls in many classes, there is no evidence of the girls being overwhelmed or of the boys becoming disinterested learners. All pupils try their best and work well, both independently and in groups. Very occasionally, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently.

The school's outstanding curriculum contributes very effectively to the pupils' enthusiasm for school and outstanding personal development. Well-organised provision in English, mathematics and ICT enables pupils to do well in these subjects. There are a number of very popular extra-curricular activities, which, along with visits and visitors, enrich the curriculum, exceptionally well. The school has been very proactive in ensuring that pupils are provided with

a number of opportunities to learn about the world around them so that they begin to develop a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs.

Pupils feel very safe and secure because of the school's outstanding pastoral care. Academic guidance is good and teachers' marking of pupils' work and oral feedback are supportive. In addition, they show pupils how to improve their work and move to the next stages of learning. Pupils have recently been given individual learning targets in literacy and numeracy, which they are excited about. Not all of the targets are written in child-friendly language so pupils do not always know exactly what their targets mean. As this is a new process, teachers' marking does not yet reflect progress towards the individual targets.

Parents feel welcome and enthusiastically support school initiatives, whether it is Friday assembly, taking part in 'Share a story' or attending a target-setting evening. One parent reflected the views of many in writing, 'It is wonderful how the school encourages family and friends to be part of a child's school life. It really makes the child feel like part of the community.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents speak highly of the good Foundation Stage provision. They are especially impressed by the induction procedures and the strong links with the village pre-school settings. As a result of good teaching and well-organised provision, children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is good. Staff are extremely skilled at engaging children in a range of stimulating activities, such as building bridges across a 'river', styling each other's hair at the hairdressers, or searching for long or short objects in the sand. Activities are carefully planned so that the children are able to regularly use both the indoor and outdoor environments. Staff work very well together as a team and children's learning is regularly assessed. Staff are currently developing their work with the children on letters and sounds. Children become independent and confident learners who behave well. It comes as no surprise that, while cohorts differ, many children enter Year 1 with skills, knowledge and abilities that are above the expected levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils' individual targets are written in child-friendly language and that teachers' marking begins to reflect progress made towards these targets.
- Extend the role of governors so that they are more actively involved in school self-evaluation.

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 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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	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?	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 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

1 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Silverstone Infant School, Towcester, Northamptonshire, NN12 8US

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school to see how well you were doing. I really enjoyed watching you work so hard in lessons and listening to you sing wonderfully in assembly. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to me said how proud you are of your school. You are right because it is a good school.

Many of you told me that your teachers are super. You are correct. They help you do really well in your work. Lessons are fun and you make good progress. You are excited about the new targets that you have been given to help with your learning. I have asked the school to make sure that everyone understands what their targets mean.

You all behave really well and it is good to see that you are part of a 'Healthy School'. Thank you for offering me some carrots and explaining why they are better for me than chocolate. You work well together and I was impressed when some of you explained the work of the 'Buddies' and the Eco committee. All these things keep you very busy, as do all of the other activities that the school provides, such as the clubs after school.

The headteacher, staff and governors do a good job in making sure that you go to a good school. They work hard to take care of you. I have asked the governors to become a bit more involved in checking what the school does well and deciding what needs to improve.

You can also help by continuing to be well behaved and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead Inspector

Annex B

1 November 2007

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Northamptonshire, NN12 8US**

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Chris Kessell
Lead Inspector