

Simon de Senlis Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121954
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314165
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Prescott
Headteacher	Elliot Howles
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Hilldrop Road East Hunsbury Northampton NN4 0PH
Telephone number	01604 661011
Fax number	01604 761768

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Simon de Senlis is a larger-than-average primary school. Most pupils are from a White British background. Other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average but there is a high proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has a 14 place unit for pupils with speech and language and moderate learning difficulties. Simon de Senlis changed from a lower to a primary school, and this process was completed in September 2004. Since the last inspection, the school has had five headteachers. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007. The governing body is in the process of electing a new Chair.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Simon de Senlis Primary is a satisfactory and improving school. There are good features to its work. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because of the effective care, guidance and support provided. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills expected for their age. Standards by the end of Year 6 are average in English and mathematics and just above average in science. While pupils make good progress in science, progress in English and mathematics is satisfactory. Most parents are pleased with the care and education provided and in return give the school good support. They are particularly pleased with the new headteacher and the increasing partnership with parents and the community. Children in Reception get off to a sound start. The satisfactory quality of teaching and the curriculum in Years 1 to 6 enables pupils to make expected progress. Across the school, teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. Instructions, questioning and explanations promote learning effectively. Pupils make good progress when they are sufficiently challenged, and tasks are well matched to their abilities. However, this good practice is not consistent in all lessons. Occasionally, lessons do not move on at sufficient pace, and learning slows because pupils are not fully engaged. The effective provision in the unit enables pupils to make good progress. The headteacher has quickly gained the confidence and respect of pupils, staff and parents. He and other key leaders are well focused on improving pupils' learning, strengthening the curriculum and raising standards. The school's performance is systematically reviewed and leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. Good systems to assess and monitor pupils' attainment have been established. Assessment information is used well to set appropriately challenging targets. The school's actions are having a positive impact. During the past three years, achievement and standards have steadily improved in Years 3 to 6. Standards by the end of Year 6 have improved from below average to average. However, leaders are aware that there is more to do before teaching and achievement are consistently good. Leadership and management are therefore satisfactory. The headteacher and staff have created a positive climate for pupils and adults to learn and work in. This is much appreciated by pupils and their parents. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance and their keen participation in activities. They are friendly, polite, helpful and relate well to others. Clear expectations by staff and good relationships lead to good pupil behaviour. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and know how to keep themselves safe. They make sound contributions to the local and wider community. Pupils have clear individual learning targets for writing, mathematics and science, so they know what they are working on to improve. They enjoy the good range of additional activities that enrich the curriculum.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills expected for their age. They quickly settle into routines and make good gains in their personal development. Progress in other areas of learning is satisfactory. Children benefit from teachers' clear instructions and explanations. They participate well in the sound range of activities provided. On occasions, over-directed work can restrict children's opportunities to explore and work independently. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children enjoy their learning and relate well with adults and their peers. The school has improved the outdoor facilities with the addition of a large covered area

which has extended the classroom and provides good opportunities for a range of outdoor learning. By the end of Reception, standards are in line with expectations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards further, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that all lessons are consistently challenging.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching, ensuring that all lessons maintain a brisk pace and that the existing good quality practice is more widespread. 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

Achievement is satisfactory across the school. Children make sound progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 2, standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. The girls perform better than the boys in all three areas but positive action is being taken to improve boys' performance. For example, teachers have incorporated drama and topics which appeal to boys into lessons. National test results for Year 6 have shown steady improvements since 2005. The change from a lower to a primary school contributed initially to lower achievement and standards in Year 6. Standards are now average in English and mathematics and just above average in science. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in science because this has been a focus for improvement and pupils have good opportunities to plan and carry out practical investigations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the unit, make good progress because teaching and support is well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good but their understanding of non-Western cultures is less strong. Pupils form good relationships with adults and amongst themselves. They work well collaboratively in a range of activities. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. The raising of funds for wellknown charities contributes to the wider community. Pupils are reasonably well prepared for their future learning. They have well-developed personal and social skills and a sound base of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, with elements of good and even outstanding practice. Teachers make the purpose of the lesson clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and effective questioning. In the unit, work and support is well tailored to pupils' needs. Some teaching, such as an English and history lesson in Year 6, provided challenging opportunities for pupils to work in groups and apply thinking, and speaking and listening skills. Pupils were fully engaged in their learning as they discussed the qualities needed for a future king of England after the death of Edward

the Confessor. However, across the school, activities and tasks are not consistently matched to pupils' needs. Most teachers use assessment information effectively to do this, but practice is not consistent in all lessons. At times, the challenge and scope of learning can be restricted by an over-reliance on worksheets. This sometimes hinders pupils' skills in organising their own work and restricts opportunities for extended writing. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows with over-long teacher introductions and pupils are not sufficiently involved in their learning. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and contribute well to learning, particularly for pupils who find learning difficult or are at an early stage of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well and enables them to make satisfactory academic progress. More investigative and problem-solving work has been introduced to mathematics and science. This is having a positive impact on achievement, particularly in science. The school is strengthening links between subjects to add greater meaning and relevance to learning. Themed activities such as a recent history project, where each year group studied the life and times around Northampton in a different century, motivated the pupils and involved their parents too. The school's new buildings are spacious and well used. A good range of additional activities contribute to pupils' enjoyment and interests. Clubs include choir, dance, football and netball. Healthy lifestyles and personal safety education are promoted well across the curriculum. Provision in the unit is good and pupils are integrated well into mainstream lessons in the afternoon.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Effective pastoral care and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. The staff know the pupils well and have established good relationships with them and their parents. A parent commented, 'Teachers are friendly, approachable and enthusiastic'. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are effective. Good care and support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. Assessment information is usually used well to plan teaching. Pupils have clear individual learning targets in writing, mathematics and science so they know what they need to do to improve. Pupils are developing skills of identifying their own targets and reviewing their progress towards them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have been successful in promoting good care, guidance and support and this has led to good personal development for pupils. Leaders are focused on improving teaching and the curriculum to raise standards. The new headteacher is providing stability after several changes of key leadership in recent years. Teamwork among the staff is strong and there is a positive commitment to improvement. Leaders have benefited from 'in house' and local authority support and training. Leadership roles, particularly in terms of monitoring and improvement planning, are developing well. Accurate and robust self-evaluations mean that the school has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development. Senior staff effectively monitor teaching and positive action is being taken to improve shortcomings in practice. The school has eliminated the underachievement in Years 3 to 6 of the past. Steady

improvements to progress and standards in Years 3 to 6 over the last two years and the acceleration of improvements by the current headteacher demonstrate a good capacity to improve. However, there is still more to do before teaching and pupils' achievement are consistently good. Governors are more involved in the school's development than at the time of the last inspection. All statutory requirements are now met. Governors are well informed about the school's performance and this enables them to provide constructive challenge.

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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	3
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	2
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

- 15 February 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Simon de Senlis Primary School, East Hunsbury NN4 OPH Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found out. Simon de Senlis is a satisfactory school with good features. Teaching is satisfactory and most of you are making sound progress. Your headteacher and staff are working hard to make the school even better. These things are strengths of the school.
- You clearly enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- Your school is a pleasant and positive place to be.
- You are friendly and polite and get on well with other pupils and adults.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making good progress in science.
- Behaviour is good in and around the school.
- A good range of additional activities is provided.
- You adopt healthy lifestyles and know how to keep safe.
- Staff know you well; they take good care of you and give you good support.
- Your parents are pleased with the school and give it good support. These are the things the school has been asked to improve.
- Some of you could make more progress, particularly in English and mathematics, and the school is working hard to challenge you more to make this happen.
- On occasions, your teachers could involve you more in your learning and ensure lessons move on at a quick pace. You can help by continuing to behave really well and by working hard in your English and mathematics lessons. Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the best for the future. With kind regards Derek Watts Lead inspector



15 February 2008

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With kind regards

Derek Watts
Lead inspector