

South Petherton Church of England Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123854
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314741
Inspection date	16 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	79
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Ballard
Headteacher	Lisa Wharton
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Path Hele Lane South Petherton TA13 5DY
Telephone number	01460 240750

Age group	4–7
Inspection date	16 September 2008
Inspection number	314741

Fax number

01460 241316

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

This infant school serves the village of South Petherton and is much smaller than average, but numbers are rising significantly. A new headteacher has been appointed this term. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has the National Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People Award, Physical Education Active Mark and Dyslexia Friendly Award.

Description of the school

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Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

South Petherton Infant School is a good school. It is a central part of the community it serves and is highly valued by parents. This is illustrated by comments such as, 'The staff are fantastic and the community spirit is truly alive. No complaints from me or my children'. The headteacher, staff and governors are dedicated to continuous school improvement. Since the last inspection, leadership and management have become more effective and are now good. Governors are knowledgeable and are more proactively involved in the strategic monitoring of the school. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and the new headteacher has made a good start in identifying key areas for improvement. High emphasis is placed in the curriculum on ensuring pupils develop good basic skills, including in information and communication technology. Most pupils achieve well because of good teaching, particularly in reading and writing where standards are well above average by the end of Year 2. However, in mathematics, higher attaining pupils are not always fully challenged, and, as a result, a small number of pupils are not doing as well as they could. Children make good progress overall in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and are well prepared for Year 1, but the limited outdoor facilities and resources restrict children's opportunities for free choice independent play. The school provides good care and support for pupils. It has created a caring, safe environment where everyone feels valued. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils behave well and show great respect for each other. The school is having a very positive effect on pupils' growth towards being well-rounded young people. Under the guidance of the new headteacher, it is well placed to build on its many successes and move forward positively.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Reception class is broadly in line with that expected. In this safe and nurturing environment, children settle in quickly. They soon make new friends, work confidently and behave well. Good teaching, a well-planned curriculum and effective use of resources, including interactive whiteboards, help children achieve well in all the areas of learning. Staff plan a good balance of activities between those that are adult-led and those the children choose. However, the outside area is unattractive, with limited resources and equipment. This restricts opportunities for children to play and learn independently by exploring and extending their skills. Groups of younger children are well supported by teaching assistants who take an active part in children's learning and help teachers monitor their progress. Good links have been established with the local playgroups and parents are encouraged to be actively involved in children's learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children achieve the expected levels when they start Year 1 and many exceed them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the tasks teachers set for higher attaining pupils in mathematics provide good levels of challenge so that their rate of progress is increased.
- Improve outdoor facilities and resources to enable more opportunities for free choice independent play in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's achievement is good, and standards are well above average in reading and writing and slightly above average in mathematics by the time they leave the school in Year 2. However, in mathematics, higher attaining pupils are not always given work well matched to their ability and they are capable of achieving more. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their needs have been identified early and targets in their individual education plans are relevant to their specific needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Their good attendance shows they enjoy being at school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships are strong and pupils find great enjoyment in helping one another, which was summed up well by one pupil's comment: 'No one can do everything but everyone can do something'. Pupils take responsibility eagerly and enjoy being monitors or members of the school council. Although pupils are heavily involved in school activities, opportunities are missed for them to participate in the local community, and links with the junior school could be stronger. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and know how to keep safe. They speak highly about the activities provided by the sports coach. Pupils' good personal development and good progress in their academic skills prepares them well for the next stage of schooling and for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is typical throughout the school and has improved markedly since the last inspection through regular monitoring by the previous headteacher. This ensures most pupils make good progress where effective learning is underpinned by the consistent approach of teachers. This is particularly the case in reading and writing. However, in mathematics, higher attainers are not always given sufficient challenge, so they do not all reach their full potential. Teachers develop very good relationships with pupils and manage their classes well, and this contributes to pupils' good personal development. Teaching assistants are fully involved in teaching activities and provide effective support to small groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

National strategies and planning guidelines are used well to ensure that learning is built on year on year, enabling children to achieve well particularly in reading and writing. The provision for information and communication technology has significantly improved since the last inspection and there are strengths in music and physical education as a result of specialist teaching. Activities to enrich the curriculum through clubs, visits out and visitors invited into school are satisfactory. The new headteacher has appropriately identified the need to review provision, particularly in the foundation subjects, in order to stimulate pupils' interest more.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers place a high priority on pupils' safety and well-being. They have a good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs and provide them with good pastoral support and guidance. Child protection procedures are fully in place and risk assessments are carried out conscientiously. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well cared for. Most parents are very appreciative of the way the school looks after their children.

Provision for academic support is not currently quite as robust as the pastoral provision. Improvements to assessment have ensured accurate information is available about pupils' attainment from the time they enter school in Reception. Good use is made of assessment information to promote pupils' progress in reading and writing, but in mathematics, higher attaining pupils do not always get work that is demanding enough to help them do their very best. Marking does not always support pupils in knowing how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection, largely due to the hard work and dedication of the previous headteacher, who left the school at the end of last term. The whole staff are willing to take on more responsibility and work effectively as a team. The new headteacher has high expectations to ensure all pupils achieve their best and are happy and safe in school. She has drawn up a cogent plan to improve outside provision in the Foundation Stage, raise the achievement of higher attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics, and provide a more creative curriculum to further boost pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning. Most parents are positive about the school and their views are regularly sought and considered. Governors are knowledgeable and hardworking. They know the school's strengths and areas for development because they are becoming more proactive in their strategic monitoring of the school, and acting as a 'critical friend'.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of South Petherton VA Infant School, South Petherton TA13 5DY.

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed our time with you. We were impressed with how polite and friendly you all were. You are right to be proud of your school, as it is a good school.

What we particularly liked about your school:

- You behave well, work hard and your new headteacher and staff are effective in helping you learn and make good progress, especially in reading and writing.
- You enjoy coming to school and your teachers plan lessons to help you to learn and do well in your work.
- You are well looked after and that helps to make you feel safe.
- You get on well together, show respect to everyone and know how important it is to help and look after others.
- You know the importance of eating healthily and enjoy regular exercise.
- You enjoy taking responsibility and are well prepared for your future education.

These are the things we have asked the school to do to make it better:

- We have asked teachers to make lessons more challenging for higher attaining children, especially in mathematics.
- We have asked the school to improve the outside area for children in the Reception class.

You can help by continuing to behave well, working hard and listening carefully to your teachers.

Best wishes for the future,

Ian Hancock Lead Inspector.