

Southwater Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125888
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315344
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Alexander
Headteacher	John Gadd
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Worthing Road Southwater Horsham RH13 9JH
Telephone number	01403 730475
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Nearly all are from White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has Dyslexia Schools' status and was awarded National Healthy Schools' accreditation in 2007. The school recently achieved the Eco Schools' Green Flag Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Autism Aware and DCD Aware School Awards and was re-accredited as an Investor in People in June 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It has an inclusive ethos and provides an excellent education for pupils, preparing them very well for the next stage of their education. It is led and managed excellently by a dedicated and enthusiastic headteacher who provides an extremely clear vision and direction for the school. He works very well with governors and staff to ensure the school regularly analyses and evaluates its performance rigorously and implements improvement strategies where needed. As a result, the school has made very good progress since the previous inspection, one such example being the improvement in the use of target setting, which has helped to raise achievement. This demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve in the future. Parents are proud of what they believe to be an excellent school, with 'Our son has flourished due to dedicated, professional and approachable teachers' being typical of the many positive comments in questionnaire replies.

Pupils enter the school with standards above those expected for their age and make well above average progress in all year groups, due to outstanding teaching which consistently meets the needs of all pupils very effectively. Teachers are dedicated to getting the best out of pupils. They have high expectations and match work very well to pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils attain very high standards, not only in English, mathematics and science but also in other subjects, such as information and communication technology (ICT). However, even though standards in Year 6 are well above the national average, the school is aware of the need to address the fact that pupils attain higher standards in reading than they do in writing.

The curriculum is outstanding and links different subjects together very well in order to ensure learning is relevant, purposeful and enjoyable. Classrooms are stimulating places and teachers use a variety of approaches to make lessons interesting. The quality of pupils' work on display is of a high standard and provides clear evidence that the school's success is not just restricted to test results. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for the more able, is very good and enables both these groups of pupils to attain their full potential.

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding and contributes very effectively to their excellent personal development and well-being. Pupils are enthusiastic about all aspects of school. They are keen and eager to learn, and this is reflected in their well above average attendance rates. Pupils really enjoy school and describe it as a friendly place where adults treat them all as individuals. Pupils make very sensible and healthy choices and take the responsibilities they are given extremely seriously. They have an excellent community spirit and say they feel safe and secure. Pupils play well together at break times and older pupils talk enthusiastically about their roles as trained mediators and about the very good links the school has with the local community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with aspects such as moral and social development being particular strengths. This is reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour and regard for the welfare of others.

This is a school that knows itself very well, although its self-evaluation is too modest. Leadership and management are outstanding. The senior leadership team provide the headteacher with very good support and the governing body fulfils its duties very effectively and offers a very high level of challenge to the school when needed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement strategies designed to improve pupils' attainment in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils across the range of abilities make outstanding progress in all year groups because excellent teaching helps them to build very effectively on previous learning. Even so, the school is not complacent and constantly analyses its performance to ensure that any gaps in learning are quickly identified and corrected. The high quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities results in these pupils making excellent progress. More able pupils consistently attain very high standards and there is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. As a result, pupils consistently reach well above average standards, not only in subjects such as English, mathematics and science but also in a wide range of other subjects, for example music, history and physical education. The progress pupils make in learning French is so good that a majority of pupils in Year 6 are at least two years ahead of where they should be for their age in both conversing and communicating in this foreign language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very friendly and polite and show a great deal of respect for others. Their attitudes to learning are excellent and pupils say they thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school. They respond very well to the high level of care and support they receive from staff. As one pupil put it, 'Teachers are nice and always treat us as individuals.' Pupils are well aware of healthy living issues and have an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping fit.

The school's work to achieve 'Eco Green Flag' status has had a profound effect on pupils, especially on older ones who fully realise the need to develop and maintain a sustainable environment. Pupils talk about the school's very good links with the community and say they enjoy taking part in fundraising activities. However, they realise there is a serious side to collecting money for charitable causes and that there are many people in the world who are far worse off than themselves. By the time pupils leave the school, they are very articulate and self-confident and are prepared very well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers are enthusiastic and dedicated. They have very high expectations and expect pupils to work hard. Outstanding teaching is typified by teachers using questioning very well to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers value pupils' responses and ensure that work is always very well matched to pupils' individual needs. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively in all classrooms to reinforce basic skills and to make learning interesting and imaginative. Pupils say they look forward to lessons and several list literacy as amongst their favourite subjects. As one pupil stated, 'I like all my lessons. They are always interesting, even literacy.'

Pupils find teachers' marking very helpful and appreciate that teachers always try to ensure that pupils understand how to improve their work. Very effective learning support assistants have a positive impact on pupils' learning and work very well with class teachers to ensure pupils are always provided with the quality of support they require to make the best possible progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and mixes different subjects together very effectively, whilst focusing on developing skills in literacy and numeracy. The school's creative approach to learning ensures all pupils achieve extremely well and thoroughly enjoy lessons. It comes as no surprise to hear pupils say, 'The curriculum is great because lessons are exciting and different.' Pupils are enthusiastic to learn more and this is reflected in the popularity of the school's interactive learning website, which pupils regularly log on to at home. Provision for music is a strength of the school. Nearly all pupils play at least one musical instrument and it is no wonder that the school's outstanding choir, with its excellent singing and close harmonies, came so close to winning a recent national competition.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development extremely well. Strong links with the local and wider community help pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world. Regular visits to places of interest and visitors to the school help bring learning alive. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs which are popular with pupils of all ages and have a very high take-up. These include a range of sporting activities and opportunities for pupils to take part in, for example, drama, gymnastics and dance. Parents appreciate the high quality of this provision and comment they are '.... particularly pleased with the extra-curricular choices, particularly sport and music, which allow children to feel capable of more than just classroom learning.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is a very pleasant, family atmosphere within the school which contributes effectively to pupils' sense of well-being. Parents value the outstanding level of attention their children receive. Pupils say they feel safe and that adults deal quickly with any rare instances of unkind behaviour. Induction and transfer arrangements are very good and help pupils settle quickly into new routines. Pupils with different learning needs receive excellent support and so make the same outstanding progress as others. Health and safety requirements are fully met and the school's child protection procedures fully meet all current criteria. Risks assessments are rigorous, especially with regard to off-site trips. The school has developed very effective assessment and tracking systems to check how well individual pupils are doing and uses these very effectively to set highly challenging targets and to ensure pupils always know what they have to do in order to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management at all levels is a key factor in ensuring that provision is of a high quality and that pupils make excellent progress and attain very high standards. The headteacher has ensured that all those associated with the school share a vision of placing pupils' needs and equal opportunities at the heart of school life. He has ensured that the school's self-evaluation very accurately identifies what needs to be done to bring about further improvement and shows what is going well and the reasons why.

The governing body is fully involved in school life. It fulfils its statutory duties very effectively and offers an excellent level of challenge and support to the school. Governors take their duties extremely seriously and have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and those areas requiring improvement. The school has developed very good links with external agencies, such as educational psychologists, which support pupils' learning particularly well, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is very well resourced. However, the school building is now beginning to show its age with some aspects, such as the single-pane metal windows, in need of replacement.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

3 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southwater Junior School, Horsham RH13 9JH

Thank you for making us feel very welcome during our visit to your school. We really enjoyed our two days at Southwater and especially liked talking to some of you about what you enjoy the most about your school and seeing you work so well in lessons. The wonderful singing of your excellent school choir also impressed us.

Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school.

- Yours is an outstanding school which makes sure you are all very well prepared for the time when you leave and go to your secondary school.
- Outstanding teaching helps to make sure that you make excellent progress and attain very high standards throughout the school.
- Your personal development is outstanding and you have a very good idea of why it is important to eat healthily and exercise as often as you can.
- The quality of care and support you receive from the school is excellent.
- You all behave extremely well and are very polite.
- Your headteacher, staff and school governors are all working very well indeed to make sure that your school continues to get even better in the future. We believe your headteacher and teachers can do something to make your school better. We have asked them to:
 - help you to improve your writing. You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron Lead Inspector