

Southway Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125941
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315365
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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	332
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annie Watts
Headteacher	Carol Davison
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2005
School address	Southway Burgess Hill RH15 9SU
Telephone number	01444 233824
Fax number	01444 230053

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. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and a small number come from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry in Year 3 is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with statements of special educational need is higher than found nationally.

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 in which pupils achieve well. Pupils achieve particularly well in science because they learn about scientific facts and knowledge through practical first-hand experiences. Pupils who left Year 6 in 2007 attained above average standards in national tests, which was a marked improvement on the previous year. Currently, the work of pupils shows that standards continue to rise and have improved owing to the school's successful work to lift pupils' achievement. Improvements are seen in teaching, the curriculum and in the systems used to check pupils' progress. The rate of progress varied too much between different groups of pupils in the past but this has been remedied successfully.

Pupils want to come to school and this is reflected in their good attendance and involvement in the many enrichment opportunities offered. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and are proud of their involvement in the school and local community. Behaviour is good, and pupils clearly enjoy learning through 'role play and learning journeys'. For example, when pupils in Year 5 gave a radio broadcast about a 'dog fight' during the Second World War. In Year 3, pupils, on the call of 'Right O my hearties', became pirates marooned on a desert island and had to use descriptive language when they interviewed each other about 'What will you need to survive?' One came up with, 'I will need a short stabbing knife to cut down palm trees for a shelter.' These are typical features promoted by the good teaching and well-planned curriculum. Robust systems have been developed to check on pupils' progress. Teachers use this information effectively to target extra support for those not achieving as well as they should. Pupils know their targets and are increasingly involved in assessing their own progress. In some classes, targets in lessons are too broad or are not sufficiently challenging. Whilst some marking is of a high quality and helps pupils improve, practice is inconsistent and pupils' individual learning targets are not always referred to through marking.

Senior leaders have achieved a great deal recently. They have identified the right priorities to raise standards and improve teaching. The headteacher has determinedly led the actions taken to bring about improvement. As a result, pupils' progress has accelerated. Pupils' reading and mathematical skills are now more secure. Pupils' writing skills have improved but these are taking longer to refine. More-able pupils are not always supported and challenged sufficiently in their writing so that they can always reach the highest standards. Leaders at all levels are committed to providing a good education so there is unity of purpose. As one teacher said, 'The headteacher always "keeps us in the loop".' Many parents recognise the school's good work, although a small minority have concerns about the school's working partnership with them. Strong links with external agencies and good pastoral support ensure all pupils are well cared for and closer links with the local infant school ensure a smooth transition from Year 2 to 3.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure more-able writers, especially, are sufficiently supported and challenged to reach the highest levels and check that teachers' marking and targets for all pupils are helpful in guiding their improvement.
- Explore ways of communicating with parents so that they are better informed about the strengths of the school, how they can help the school to improve and how they can learn about their children's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The 2007 test results in English, mathematics and science were at above expected levels and showed a marked improvement on the previous year. Attainment at the higher levels in mathematics and especially in science were significantly higher than nationally. This was more typical of the school's results over recent years and the school exceeded its challenging targets. The rate of progress was too variable, especially in English and mathematics, as middle-ability pupils and more-able girls achieved less well than others. The school recognised this and took action to improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. These improvements have been successful so that pupils' achievement is good. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's own assessments indicates current standards are above average. This is because teaching is good, and pupils' performance is monitored regularly. In addition, the curriculum has been adapted so that it really captures pupils' interests and more closely meets their needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they are well supported. Nonetheless, the school is aware of the need to sustain the recent improvements and to secure greater consistency in pupils' writing skills especially at the higher levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour is good and pupils are very aware of expectations which contribute to good moral development. They thrive in a safe environment and consequently enjoy their learning and are not afraid to ask for help when needed. Pupils have good social skills because many lessons feature good opportunities for paired and group activities. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their positive attitudes. Pupils understand the need for healthy eating and physical activity, and take part in many sporting activities, including the Funky Feet Dance Class and the Track and Field Club. They are proud of their responsibilities within the school and community, and make a positive contribution through the school council. They work successfully as peer mentors, environmental eco-warriors and are involved in charitable work in the community. Pupils' successes are celebrated well, and this helps to promote confidence and the ability to show initiative and independence, preparing them well for their future lives. Pupils' spiritual development is not quite as strong as their moral, social and cultural development. In recognition of its work, the school holds Healthy Schools and Eco awards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Positive relationships are a strong feature in lessons and the subsequent mutual respect means that pupils have good attitudes to learning. As a result, they are motivated and engaged in lessons. Most areas of class management are effective through consistent pace, frequent refocusing pupils on task and the use of interesting resources, such as interactive whiteboards. Lesson planning is structured to provide good challenge for all, including the more able. However, the work set is not always matched as effectively as it could be to ensure all reach their full potential. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well, especially those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. The focus on speaking and listening skills and paired and group tasks is good and results in some independence of thought and good collaborative skills. The

pace of some lessons slows down though when introductions are too long and this impedes further development of independent work. Marking is increasingly effective, although not all teachers give constructive and specific comments to help pupils move on. The use of targets has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, but these would benefit from being more specific and referred to more when marking pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The introduction of 'learning journeys', which involve pupils in planning learning activities, has motivated and engaged them in their learning. Those at risk of underperforming or who need greater challenge are usually given specific support to succeed. Programmes, such as 'sounds discovery', have led to measurable improvements whilst direct teaching of phonics is taking time to be established. The school understands that to sustain and build on recent improvements in writing, more-able pupils especially need to be consistently challenged in their writing to achieve higher levels. The new primary framework for literacy and numeracy is not in place but changes to planning in literacy have ensured more meaningful writing opportunities. The focus on sentence level work and structured reading sessions has strengthened pupils' achievement. The increased emphasis on mental mathematical skills is consolidating their skills. The successful 'working together' programme in personal, social, health and citizenship education means pupils leave with good basic skills, are self-confident and can work well together or independently. A very good range of activities, including educational visits and a residential trip for Year 6, clubs and sport are very popular. French, taught in Years 3 and 4, and the opportunities for many pupils to play musical instruments help enrich their experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Effective promotion of good behaviour, meaningful learning, and a positive contribution to the community is at the heart of the school's work. Very good standards of care contribute to pupils' enjoyment for learning. Teachers know all their pupils as individuals, and seek to promote equality for all. Classroom support is carefully deployed and makes a good contribution to learning. Pupils who may be at risk are identified early. The school works well with outside agencies to give them the care, support and guidance they need. More robust systems are in place to check and track pupils' progress and pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their own progress. Nonetheless, practice is more established in some classes and subjects than in others. Links with parents are satisfactory. The school provides regular newsletters and encourages visits to school when needed. However, a small minority of parents comment that the school does not always work as well as it could in partnership with them. Responsibility for children's well-being is taken very seriously, and legal requirements for safeguarding health and safety are secure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their commitment has enabled the school to raise achievement. Subject and year group leaders play a valuable part in supporting colleagues. They have regular opportunities to undertake monitoring activities that ensure progress in teaching, learning and pupils' subject knowledge.

The school has good structures and systems in place to ensure its smooth running. Resources, including external agencies, are used well to improve outcomes for pupils. Governors are supportive and are kept regularly updated by the headteacher. The chair of governors has rightly identified that fellow governors need to be more actively involved in challenging the school so that they can contribute more fully to its development. The majority of parents are fully supportive of the school's work. Given the ongoing improvements and its track record of past achievements, the school has a good capacity to improve.

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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

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?	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	2

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?	2
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

15 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southway Junior School, Burgess Hill, RH15 9SU

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work. I am pleased to tell you that yours is a good school.

These are some important things we found out about your school:

- You make good progress and pupils in Year 6 reach above average results. You do especially well in science.
- Your behaviour is good and you told us how much you enjoy all the extra clubs and activities you can do and that there is a good range. We agree with you.
- Teaching is good and teachers make learning interesting and fun for you.
- You told us that you know your targets and like it when you can comment on how well you are doing.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors lead the school well and are working hard together to make sure that Southway Junior School is even better.
- You know about how to lead safe and healthy lives and you told us how proud you are to be peer mentors, eco-warriors and school councillors.
- You told us how well the adults look after you and we agree.

This is what we have asked the school to do to make it even better:

- To make sure those of you who find writing easy are helped to achieve your very best and that when your work is marked the comments explain what you need to do to improve and whether or not you have met your individual targets.
- We want your headteacher and teachers to improve the way they work in partnership with your parents.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by making sure you tell teachers that you need to know exactly how to improve your work, especially those of you who find writing easy.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning Lead inspector

15 May 2008

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Sheila Browning
Lead inspector