

# Southdown Community Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109005
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	324877
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Shirley Billington

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	134
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	28
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Mayne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Adams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mount Road Southdown Bath BA2 1LG

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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324877

**Telephone number**  
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a small infant school situated in an area with significant social and economic challenges. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion that has learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but there are increasing numbers from a variety of minority ethnic groups. A small number of these are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Children in the Nursery and Reception Year are taught together in a unit for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nursery children attend part-time, but parents are able to use their childcare vouchers for extra sessions if they wish.

## 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 is exceptionally successful in meeting the wide- ranging needs of its pupils and ensuring that each individual benefits from all that it has to offer. Almost all parents are positive about every aspect of the school's work. Several made comments such as, 'My daughter has gained in confidence and will be sad to leave' and 'In this caring environment, it is easy to see how the children achieve their goals.' There are three main factors that contribute to the school's success.

The first is the excellent care, support and guidance provided. Pastoral care is of the highest order, particularly for those pupils who need extra support to cope with either short- or long-term difficulties. The school offers a wide range of carefully tailored programmes to meet individual needs. These include, for example, specific strategies to boost pupils' skills in key aspects of literacy or numeracy and support plans to help individuals to overcome behavioural or emotional difficulties. The impact of these early interventions is evident in pupils' rapid gains in learning and their growing ability to understand how to cope with feelings of anger or frustration. One boy, for example, explained that keeping a diary was helping him to think about how to change his behaviour. Partnerships with parents and other agencies are exceptionally strong and the school actively supports its local community. A range of initiatives has been introduced, such as the 'stay and play' club for parents and carers with young children, and drop-in sessions to talk to the school's parent liaison adviser. These provide excellent opportunities for families to meet together, to seek advice if they need it and to gain confidence in supporting their children's learning.

Secondly, the school effectively adapts all aspects of provision to meet the needs of the pupils. Teaching and learning throughout the school are outstanding because a wide range of strategies is used to extend pupils' skills and understanding, whatever their starting points. Excellent relationships within the classroom provide a firm foundation for successful learning. Pupils are skilfully engaged in lessons and exceptionally well motivated to succeed. The curriculum is exemplary because of the emphasis placed on equipping pupils to be successful learners. This is evident in an exceptionally strong programme to boost pupils' skills in language. Many children start school with a limited vocabulary and lack confidence in expressing their ideas. High priority is therefore given to improving their oral skills in order to secure a firm foundation for the development of literacy skills. This is done within a range of topics and themes that are highly relevant to the pupils' needs and interests.

The third element is highly effective leadership. The headteacher and staff are ambitious for the pupils and each 'goes the extra mile' to help them to succeed. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are very thorough and the information is very well used to pick up any that are not doing as well as they should and provide extra support where necessary. Very challenging targets are set for pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and the vast majority meet and often exceed these. It is testament to the school's success that groups that may have barriers to learning, such as those in the early stages of learning English and those on free school meals, do at least as well as their peers and attain much higher standards than similar groups nationally.

The outcome of excellent provision and exceptionally strong leadership is that pupils' personal development is outstanding and they achieve exceptionally well. From a low base on entry to the Nursery, children make good, and at times rapid, progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. While standards are below average at the end of the Reception Year, the excellent

foundation that children have is successfully built on in Years 1 and 2. As a result, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Pupils are very well prepared in almost all respects for the next stage in their learning and for later life. However, their awareness of the diversity of cultures represented in the United Kingdom and globally is very limited.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children are offered an exceptional range of stimulating experiences within a secure and well-organised learning environment. Children of all abilities make at least good progress in all areas of learning. In particular, they make outstanding progress in their acquisition of early reading skills and in developing knowledge and understanding of the world. Writing is a weaker area and girls have generally made better progress than boys in this area. The curriculum has been adjusted to engage boys more actively in literacy-related activities and the most recent assessments show an increase in the proportion of boys attaining levels expected for their age.

Children develop confidence as learners and many of the older ones work well independently and in small groups. They often show exceptional concentration in practical tasks. A high degree of attention is paid to ensuring children's welfare. Their achievements are carefully tracked through observational notes and photographs that form attractive 'learning diaries'. These are shared with parents, so that they begin to get a clear view of their children's learning and areas for development. Provision is exceptionally well led and managed. Staff work very closely as a team and are well deployed to ensure a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Nursery provision is managed flexibly so that children can stay for lunch or benefit from extra sessions if parents wish. Several parents commented on the excellent start provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their views are summed up by one: 'I love the focus on play, the support of all adults and the good home-school communication.'

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity of cultures represented in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

There was good improvement in the results of assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2008 when standards rose to above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Initial data for current Year 2 pupils show that this improvement has been maintained. There has been an increase in pupils attaining higher levels but the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this year group is likely to result in overall standards that are broadly similar. Nevertheless, what the results clearly demonstrate is that pupils of all abilities do well in relation to their starting points. Although both boys and girls achieve exceptionally well, there is a difference in their performance that reflects the national picture. The school has identified that boys do particularly well in mathematics and therefore adjustments have been made to the curriculum to boost their skills in literacy to the same level. This is bringing about improvement, and the gap in boys' and girls' achievement, which is most evident in writing, is beginning to close.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils show they enjoy school by their eagerness to do well in lessons and their enthusiasm for the wide range of additional activities offered. Their behaviour is excellent. They develop exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and say they like school because it is a place where they can 'easily make friends'. Pupils of all backgrounds form excellent relationships with adults and peers. They feel very safe in school and are clear that they would turn to an adult if they have any concerns. They recognise the importance of making healthy choices at lunchtime and being active in the playground or through participation in a variety of sporting activities.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through a link with a school in Zambia and fundraising for various charities, pupils learn to appreciate the needs of others. They readily take on a range of responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to making decisions, for example about lunchtime activities, through the school council. Attendance levels, which were very low in the past, have considerably improved and the school has had great success in reducing the number of persistent absentees. Almost all pupils' attendance is good and they fully benefit from all the school has to offer.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Learning is supported exceptionally well because teachers have a thorough understanding of pupils' needs and abilities. Work is carefully planned to support the next step in their learning. Learning support assistants make an excellent contribution to the quality of learning, particularly when working with small groups on specific support programmes. Resources, particularly interactive whiteboards, are used very effectively to engage pupils' interests and to demonstrate key teaching points. Relationships are excellent and most older pupils show good ability to sustain concentration and work independently.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned to meet the needs of individual pupils. Successful adaptations have been made over the past year to motivate boys to write for a variety of purposes, through, for example, work on topics such as 'mini-beasts' and 'superheroes'. Pupils are encouraged to make links across different subjects so that they apply their literacy and numeracy skills, for instance to record their findings in science.

Pupils' experiences are extended well through participation in local events, working with visitors to the school and a variety of visits, for example to a city farm, Bath Abbey and local shops. Pupils enjoy an excellent range of lunchtime and after-school activities, including sports and musical events, gardening and a computer club.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in school. Excellent links with outside agencies, such as mental health services and the school nurse, are particularly

successful in supporting the needs of individual pupils and their families. Attendance has significantly improved due to the school's rigorous systems to encourage regular attendance and provide specific support or challenge to a few families where children have frequent absences.

Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and frequently reviewed so that adjustments can be quickly made to address any gaps where necessary. In lessons, targets for each pupil support their rapid gains in key skills in literacy and numeracy. Most pupils are very aware of their targets and very keen to succeed in meeting these.

Pupils with specific needs benefit from an excellent range of well-targeted programmes that have a significant impact on their learning. Progress is often made at an exceptional rate. One child, for example, improved his reading age by two years six months in the course of a twenty-week programme. Pupils learning English as an additional language benefit from extra support and, within a short space of time, are making progress at the same rate as their peers.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher and staff share a clear sense of direction and are continually seeking to further enhance opportunities for learning wherever possible. This has resulted in the rise in standards seen over the past two years. This, together with the impact of initiatives to bring about improvement, for example in tackling poor attendance and improving boys' skills in literacy, demonstrate outstanding capacity to improve further.

Staff with leadership roles make an excellent contribution to school development. Each is involved in checking on the effectiveness of the areas that they oversee. A range of monitoring activities, including scrutiny of work and planning and discussions with pupils, contribute to regular evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are very supportive of the school and are increasingly involved in asking questions about the effectiveness of its work. The school is highly effective in meeting the needs of its community, making use of local facilities and contributing to a wide variety of events within the locality. However, links with contrasting areas within the United Kingdom and the wider world are underdeveloped.



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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

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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**

1 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Southdown Community Infant School, Bath BA2 1LG

You may remember that we visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all of you who talked to us about what you were doing in lessons, what you think about school and how you feel you are being helped to learn. I thought you might be interested in what we are saying in our report. Yours is an excellent school. We could see why you enjoy learning so much and why your parents and carers are so pleased with your progress.

You do exceptionally well because you are taught so well. Staff check very carefully to see what you know and can do and then plan for the next step in your learning. This means that all of you, whether you are quick to learn or need a bit of extra help, are given things to do that are at just the right level to meet your needs. We were impressed that you know your targets and that many of you could explain what you need to do to make your work better.

We were also impressed with your excellent behaviour and the way that you learn to work and play together. You told us that you feel safe in school, and staff certainly take very good care of you. You know how important it is to eat healthily and to have lots of exercise – even on an exceptionally hot day, you were very active in the playground! The school works hard to make sure you are in school every day that you can possibly be there. We know that attendance is getting better so well done to all of you – it makes a huge difference to your learning if you are in school regularly. And, as you told us, there are so many exciting things to do! We know you enjoy working with visitors and going out on visits. You also have a chance to join lots of different clubs – many more than we usually find in an infant school.

There is one thing that we have suggested the school needs to do now. That is to help you to learn more about all the different people living in our country and the wider world. This is very important because you will meet people from a wide variety of backgrounds as you grow up and move into the world of work.

Thank you again for all your help.

Yours faithfully

Shirley Billington

Lead Inspector