

South Green Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115039
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326118
Inspection date	7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	189
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	Mr Julian Horspole
Headteacher	Mrs Stephanie Ireland
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ganels Road Billericay Essex CM11 2TG
Telephone number	01277 651478
Fax number	01277 651506

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How involved are subject leaders and governors in driving school improvement?
- How does the school account for its effectiveness in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?
- How high are standards in subjects other than reading, writing, mathematics and science?

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, governors, pupils and staff, observations of lessons and children at work, parents' questionnaires and scrutinising documents, including records that track children's progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a broadly average sized infant school. Most pupils come from white British families with a few from minority ethnic heritages. Very few pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average overall. Nevertheless, in some year groups the percentage is very high. Eligibility for free school meals is below the national average. The school provides a nursery class for up to 52 children aged between three and four. Pupils from the infant school may join the breakfast club provided by the neighbouring junior school. These are not managed by the infant school governors and do not form part of this inspection.

When children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage most are not reaching the expected standards for their age and very few are exceeding them. Consequently, on entry to the Reception classes, attainment overall is significantly below expected levels. The school gained the Healthy Schools National Award in 2008 and the Activemark in 2007 and 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

South Green is a good school. This matches its own evaluation. Some elements of its work are outstanding. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Comments such as, 'The headteacher is a real asset to the school and her enthusiasm for South Green, its pupils and all it has to offer, is endless', reflect the views of many. The headteacher leads the school with considerable strength and sensitivity. She has an astute understanding of how far the school has come since the previous inspection and the challenges it still faces. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science have risen since the previous inspection. Pupils have attained above average standards in all areas for the last three years, having made good progress during Key Stage 1. Pupils currently in Year 1 are on track to reach similar standards, having also made good progress. Pupils currently in Year 2 achieve well given their starting points.

Leadership and management are good overall and the track record of good improvement means the school is well placed for further development. Governance is now good because governors are much more involved and knowledgeable about the school. They are checking how well the school is doing and helping to plan for its future effectively. Subject leaders are far more knowledgeable about standards in the subjects for which they are responsible, including subjects other than English, mathematics and science. This is based on more frequent and accurate assessment. It means that staff know that pupils reach expected levels in most subjects but exceed expectations for their age in singing and art. They recognise that the next step is for them to take a greater lead in deciding how to improve their subjects further. This year the headteacher has been supported by a newly formed senior management team, who have made a good start to taking a strategic view to school improvement. The school knows that this team will change next year and has conducted an audit of skills within the school. However, there is more to be done in clearly identifying roles and responsibilities, especially for those taking the most senior roles.

The commitment to ensuring the best possible experience for every pupil is exceptionally strong. It contributes, for example, to the extremely effective inclusion of those pupils who have the most significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The provision is led and managed well. Identification of pupils' needs is rapid and there is a good range of special programmes available for pupils who are struggling. These features, combined with consistently good teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, account for the good progress made by most pupils who find learning difficult. There are examples of exceptional achievement for some individual pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Adults and pupils enjoy good relationships which underpin a positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Teachers make consistently good use of their knowledge of individual pupils to ensure that the challenge for each child is well-pitched for their needs. Academic guidance is good. There are examples of helpful marking and pupils say their teachers 'encourage' them. Pupils also say there are too many learning targets to remember them all. The school has identified as an area for improvement the refining of how staff use targets to further stretch pupils' thinking and problem solving skills. The school recognises that there is more to be done in identifying and transferring outstanding elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision to enrich teaching and learning in Key Stage 1.

Pastoral care and support are good. Statutory procedures for safeguarding are met. The school has a very caring culture so pupils feel happy, secure and ready to learn. They make an impressive contribution to their school and local community. For example, members of the school council

diligently turn off lights when they see an opportunity to save energy. They take great pride in their school environment, for example by keeping it tidy and free of litter. They demonstrate considerable maturity as playground monitors or reading partners' to even younger pupils. They contribute well to the local community through visits to elderly residents, or involvement in local events. Pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is supported by an effective curriculum that matches their key literacy and mathematical skills well. They have a good level of enjoyment and several different choices of 'favourite subject', that demonstrates the breadth of the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' emotional well-being and ensuring they know how to stay healthy. Consequently, their knowledge of healthy lifestyles and willingness to participate fully, for example in the daily, energetic exercise sessions, are excellent. While behaviour overall is good, on occasions it is impeccable. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. Strengths within the curriculum give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate a mature appreciation of the natural world. This is evident, for example, in the quality of their artwork in the style of Seurat, or their three-dimensional snails; the quality of their poetry and their appreciation of mini-beasts, fish, gerbils and stick insects.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Early Years Foundation Stage because it is extremely well led and managed and it gives children a great start. The coordinator of the provision has an excellent understanding of how children at this age learn best. She is perceptive about the strengths within her team and finds very effective ways of promoting their further development. For example, planning has colour coded prompts for staff to ensure their observations and assessments are increasingly precise and useful in determining next steps for learning. These strengths result in a team who ensure that while expectations are high, learning is fun. For example, children physically, and enthusiastically, leap from one letter tile to another in an outside area as they link letters and sounds to spell out words such as 'fun'. Staff make very good use of natural resources and the outside areas to enrich children's language, and their understanding of the world around them. As one child left on the day of the inspection she gleefully shared with a parent, 'I touched seaweed'.

Children's welfare is paramount. They are skilfully supported in having the freedom to test out resources and experiment, so they make safe choices. For example, while children enjoyed feeling sand between their toes and describing their experience to an adult, they successfully avoided treading on shells. Great care is taken to ensure children make a smooth transition first into Nursery and then into the Reception classes. Parents are pleased by how rapidly their children settle. Staff visit children at home before they start Nursery and the coordinator oversees adjusting assessment procedures and activities to ensure that precise and individual next steps are planned following these initial visits. Consequently, the insight these visits provide ensures staff meet children's needs from their first moment in school.

Much emphasis is placed on children's independence and choice. Staff know when and how to intervene and when to stand back and give children space to pursue their own ideas. This skill, combined with resources and activities that cover more than one area of learning, and reflect children's interests, contribute to the remarkable progress they make in all areas. During the inspection one child in the Nursery first flattened then rolled play-dough with a rolling pin, cut it into strips with scissors, then rolled it into small balls between his palms. His impressive perseverance, planning and choice of tools enabled him to extend and apply both physical and mathematical skills throughout this entirely independent activity.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision to the rest of the school.
- Embed plans to clarify roles and responsibilities among the most senior staff.

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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?	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?	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	1
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	1
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	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	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**

8 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of South Green Infant School, Ganel's Road CM11 2TG

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when Mr Sissons and I inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you, talking with you and looking at your work. Your singing in assembly was really good, much better than most children at your age. We think you are making good progress and agree with you and your families that you go to a good school.

Here are some of the important things that are good about your school.

- You make amazing progress in the nursery and reception classes.
- You make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Years 1 and 2.
- You behave well in lessons and are kind to each other around school.
- You know a lot about keeping healthy.
- You are very grown up in the way you help around school.
- The teaching in your school is good because adults know you all well and plan to help each of you.
- Some children who find learning very difficult make brilliant progress.
- You know that all the adults care about you and so you feel safe in school.
- Your headteacher, governors and teachers keep making the school even better and have some good ideas about how to carry on doing this.

We have asked them to do two more things in particular.

- Find ways of making some of the brilliant things that happen in the Nursery and Reception classes happen in the rest of the school.
- Make sure that all the grown ups know exactly who is doing what to help Mrs Ireland.

You can help by continuing to behave so well. Thank you again for all your help.

With best wishes

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector