

Soudley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115521
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326214
Inspection date	7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jennifer Taylor

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	65
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	Margaret Still
Headteacher	Saron Hetenyi
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road Soudley Cinderford GL14 2UA
Telephone number	01594 822004
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Soudley School is much smaller than most schools. The school is situated in a small rural community in the Forest of Dean. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into a Reception group. There is a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements, than the national average. The number of pupils on roll has been falling, but the school is currently oversubscribed. There have been considerable staffing changes recently, but there is now an established teaching team. The headteacher joined the school in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The governors and staff have identified key areas for improvement and there is now a settled staff who have begun to introduce new strategies. The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear understanding of the needs of the school. As a result, important improvements have been made to assessment and the tracking of individual pupils' progress. Changes to the curriculum have brought greater excitement to learning, and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. These improvements are beginning to lift the quality of teaching. As a result of good care, guidance and support, pupils develop well to become polite, confident and articulate young people.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter Reception class with skills below expected levels, particularly in communication and numeracy skills. They make good progress, so that by the time they enter Year 1 they reach broadly average levels. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Consequently, broadly average standards are reached at Year 2 and maintained at Year 6. Higher standards are not yet reached because the school is relatively less successful at gaining the higher levels, particularly in mathematics and science, at Year 6. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and behave well within classes and around the school. These qualities in particular were praised by parents.

The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. The recently introduced assessment procedures are enabling teachers to challenge pupils more effectively than before, and this means that many lessons are now taught well. Nevertheless, the school is aware that it is not as successful at challenging more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6. There is good support for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make good progress. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy coming to school a good deal and feel safe. They take an active role within the school as 'peer mentors' and 'buddies', and also take part in events in the village. Pupils are developing sound skills in literacy and numeracy to contribute to their future economic well-being. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. The headteacher has led the school well through its recent period of staff changes and the introduction of new initiatives. However, newly appointed subject leaders have not yet had the time to make a significant impact on their areas of responsibility. The dedicated staff and headteacher, supported by the governors, have implemented some important changes to provision in order to bring about further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with abilities and skills that are below the levels expected for their age. As a result of consistently good teaching they make good progress and reach average standards by the time they enter Year 1. The exciting and well planned curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of all children, and offers good support to those who are showing signs of exceptional gifts or talents. There is a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. This flexibility is particularly valuable when a child requires more practical and investigative experiences before moving on to more formal learning. The children are well cared for and their safety and welfare are priorities. There are many opportunities to develop their

confidence and independence. They eagerly take part in a wide range of activities and show pleasure in being challenged. They show respect for others, behave very well and are eager to learn. The outside area reserved for Early Years Foundation Stage children provides valuable opportunities to use larger apparatus and enjoy more practical activities, but is showing signs of wear. In addition, it is not possible to access this space directly from the classroom, which restricts learning opportunities. Good leadership and management have created effective links with parents, carers and the wide variety of pre-school settings. This helps children to settle quickly into the welcoming environment of the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure work provides sufficient challenge for all pupils in mathematics and science, particularly for the more able.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to increase their influence on raising standards and achievement. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement overall is satisfactory. After their good progress in Reception, pupils make satisfactory progress during Years 1 to 6. Standards are broadly average in Year 2 and by the time pupils leave the school at Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of needs, receive closely focused support, so they make good progress.

Very recently the school has introduced measures so that pupils' progress can be tracked with greater precision. This improvement has ensured a greater match of work to pupils' needs and abilities, but has not yet been fully effective in challenging the more able to do their very best. This shortcoming is most apparent in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6, where fewer pupils reach the higher Level 5 than they do in English. The school is already taking steps to tackle this issue, and has introduced more rigorous assessment procedures in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is apparent in their enthusiasm for learning and eagerness to do well. Attendance is good. Pupils work well together and show respect and care for each other, which is reflected in the industrious, orderly school community. Pupils care for each other, as is readily shown in their thoughtful support for children who are new to the school. A number of parents expressed concern that children experience bullying, but pupils say they are not aware of any bullying. Pupils' behaviour in class and in the playground is good at all times, as it was on a walk into the forest during the inspection.

Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The proximity of the forest allows many exciting opportunities to fire the imagination of pupils and for them to reflect on the beauty of the natural world. Pupils know how to keep healthy, making barley bread to demonstrate healthy food, taking advantage of the sporting and games facilities at the local high school to keep fit, and hosting the Forest Schools' Country Dancing Festival for 20 local schools. Pupils feel safe. They know their teachers will help them deal with any worries they

may have. The school council helps them understand how the democratic process works, allowing them to put forward suggestions as to how they think their school should be. There is good involvement in the local community and the school supports many of the village events. Pupils raise money for a range of charities and there is a growing understanding of the wider world through the twinning with a community in France and the enactment of a Hindu wedding. There is satisfactory preparation for the future in pupils' competent use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While many lessons are now taught well, they do not always challenge the more able pupils as much as they should. Pupils are motivated to learn and maintain their interest well. There are good relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils are keen to participate in interesting lessons and behave well. Classes are managed effectively and teachers know their pupils well. Recently introduced assessment procedures are providing helpful information to teachers so that their planning is beginning to match the needs of pupils more accurately. Pupils appreciate the phonics programme and believe it helps them to improve their spelling. Pupils know their targets and are beginning to use them to improve their work. However, there has been insufficient time for the recent innovations and assessment procedures to fully bring about expected improvements. Good support for pupils who experience difficulties, particularly in mathematics, is helping them to make good progress. Homework is used appropriately to allow all pupils to practise skills and research linked to their class work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improvements to the curriculum are already proving successful, but have not yet had time to become fully established or to provide the consistent level of challenge needed to lift attainment at the higher end. The school aims to develop an exciting curriculum that links subjects together. This approach is beginning to create greater enthusiasm and interest amongst the pupils and their motivation is increasing. Pupils are now more involved in planning their work because they understand better what they need to learn and how successful they are. There is a well-used resource in the adjacent Forest School, where teaching and learning become more exciting and engaging so that pupils have a better knowledge and understanding of the world around them. For example, pupils were learning about adverbs and adjectives as well as exploring their senses and feelings by sitting in a glade discussing what they could see, hear and touch. There is an appropriate use of information and communication technology, particularly pupils' use of laptops during lessons to practise skills. Pupils enjoy a valuable range of extra-curricular activities, including gardening club and football, as well as residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Strong pastoral support contributes well to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school, while academic guidance and support are gradually proving more effective. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and show respect for their pupils. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is good towards both adults and other children. Current requirements for protecting and

safeguarding pupils are met. Good relationships and the small number of pupils mean that staff know their pupils very well. Pupils are confident that they will be kept safe and secure. There is good support for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Academic guidance is good for literacy and social skills and is developing in other subjects. Pupils' understanding of standards required, target setting and marking is increasing because they are involved much more than they were in assessing what they do. Pupils are becoming more able to understand their targets in numeracy and what to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, with the support of the senior leadership team, has been instrumental in leading and supporting a relatively inexperienced team following a period of significant changes to staff. The school is united in its endeavours to improve progress and standards, and there is a clear understanding of its effectiveness. More settled staffing arrangements have enabled the school to move forward with some important improvements to the curriculum and assessment, which are gradually becoming established and improving teaching, but have yet to make a full impact. In this small school, subject leaders have not yet had time to fully develop their role. However, they have responded well and have clearly identified areas which need improvement. Working as a team, staff have identified important priorities for development and new initiatives have been introduced after careful analysis and planning. All these factors demonstrate satisfactory capacity for moving on. Staff and governors are well aware that they have more to do to raise standards, particularly in mathematics and science, and to increase the challenge for more able pupils. The provision for community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils play an active part in the local community and are gradually widening their understanding of national and global issues. The majority of parents support the school and endorse the view of their children that they like coming to school because they enjoy learning.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Soudley School, Cinderford GL14 2UA

Thank you for making us so welcome to your school. We enjoyed being with you because you were so polite, friendly and well behaved. Your enthusiasm and the way you worked so well together help you to learn. It was interesting to talk to you and hear about all the exciting things you do. My visit with you to the Forest School to listen to the sights and sounds in preparation for writing was particularly enjoyable. The barley bread you made tasted very good too.

Yours is a satisfactory school and staff and governors are working hard to make it even better. We found that you work hard in lessons and behave well both in class and when you are outside. At the moment you are making satisfactory progress. Some of you are capable of making faster progress and reaching higher standards, especially in science and mathematics. We have asked your teachers to give you work and guidance that will help you to do this.

Some of you told us how much you appreciated working with others to help you understand your work in mathematics and how helpful your teachers are. You are getting to know your targets and beginning to use these to help you improve your work.

In your small school, all the teachers have responsibilities for subjects, and some of them are fairly new to the school. We have asked the school to help them develop their new roles so that they can improve how well you learn in each subject.

You can help by continuing to work hard, using your targets and always trying to do the best that you possibly can.

We wish you well for the future

Yours faithfully

- Jennifer Taylor
- Lead inspector