

South End Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121861
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327586
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	268
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	Simon Crocker
Headteacher	Andrew Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wymington Road Rushden NN10 9JU
Telephone number	01933 356571
Fax number	01933 356583

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- whether boys do as well as girls
- the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- how well the school has improved provision to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT).

Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, a governor, pupils, parents and staff, visits to all classes, scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of other aspects of the school day such as break and lunchtime, and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' 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

South End is a larger-than-average infant school. The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with the remainder representing a wide range of heritages. Almost all pupils speak English at home, although there is a small but increasing number for whom English is not their first language. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in three Reception classes. The headteacher took up his post in October 2008, having previously been deputy headteacher and briefly acting headteacher. At present there is no substantive deputy headteacher; the post is being filled in an acting capacity by a current member of staff.

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. Parents support this judgement and are lavish in their praise of the school. One of the key reasons for its success is that very careful evaluation has been carried out to identify areas for development and plans have been extremely successfully implemented to address these aspects. For instance, the school noted the relatively weaker performance of boys and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the national assessments last year. Such was the success of measures put in place to improve provision that boys have now caught up with girls in reading and mathematics and are closing the gap in writing. Many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have made astounding progress over the last year as a result of the extra help they have been given. Parents are very positive about the support provided for their children, saying such things as, 'Extra help and support is put in place if a child requires it, including for those who are ahead of their peers.'

When children join the school in the Reception classes, they generally have levels of skills and knowledge that are in line with those expected, although these are often weaker in some key areas of learning such as writing, reading and calculation. This is particularly true for the group currently in Reception. Pupils leave from Year 2 having reached standards that are significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. These standards have been maintained since at least 2004 and in some years they have been exceptionally high. Pupils make excellent progress through the school and their achievement is outstanding. The last inspection identified weaknesses in resources for ICT, which led to lower standards in this subject. This has been addressed very effectively and pupils now demonstrate sophisticated skills in this subject, for instance using a computer-aided design program to design hand puppets, which they subsequently made. Standards in art are high, with displays around the school showing pupils' wide range of excellent skills.

The major reason for pupils' excellent progress is outstanding teaching. Lessons are typified by high levels of challenge, excellent relationships and a lively sense of purpose. For instance, in Year 2, whilst discussing Indian stories, children were being challenged to think of much more lively verbs that might have been used. In another class they were being asked to find out what words such as 'affluent' and 'dense' meant in the context of the story. Pupils were very keenly involved in these tasks, welcoming the challenge. As a pupil put it, 'Teachers help us a lot to learn new things.' A further contributory factor to pupils' progress is the engaging and broad curriculum, which is designed very well to interest the pupils. The current work on India not only inspires and enthuses the pupils, for example when looking at and describing saris, but adds considerably to their understanding of other cultures and races. This work is to culminate in a visit from an Indian dance group, adding first-hand experience to the project.

The care provided for pupils is excellent. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding requirements were met. Excellent attention is given to ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for. Parents are extremely positive about this aspect, saying such things as, 'All staff are very caring, friendly and supportive.' Excellent use is made of outside agencies when necessary to support individual pupils. Academic guidance is very effective. Extremely careful analysis is carried out of the progress that pupils are making to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind. Very challenging targets are set for all pupils' future progress and almost all achieve these targets. A particular strength is the very effective way that 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' are used in teachers' marking. Pupils know that these are there so that they can see how successful they have been and what they need to do to improve. Parents very much

appreciate the comment sheets which keep them up to date with progress and that 'teachers always have suggestions for things to do at home'.

The result of this outstanding pastoral care is pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. They feel extremely safe in school and thoroughly enjoy all that is provided for them. They particularly enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the trips and visitors. Attendance has improved and is now good. Although they are well aware of the requirements of a healthy lifestyle, not all pupils put this into practice in their daily lives, with too many having unhealthy items in their lunch boxes, for example. Behaviour is managed very well, although pupils occasionally forget what is expected of their behaviour outside lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, a particular strength being their awareness of a wide range of other cultures. Their contribution to the community is excellent. The school council is very proactive and has, for example, linked with the town council to organise a big litter pick up. Two members also represent the school on the cluster council, with their voices being heard, along with those of older pupils in other local schools. Pupils are being extremely well prepared for their futures, with their excellent development of basic skills and very good work ethic.

At the root of the school's success are outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher provides extremely clear direction for the school and this has been communicated very well and is shared by all staff and governors. Monitoring is rigorous and leads to accurate self-evaluation and a continuous drive for further improvement. Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors have received a considerable amount of well-focused training. Their role in monitoring and the levels of challenge they now offer the school are particular strengths. Equality of opportunity has a high priority in the school, every effort being made to ensure that all are able to achieve as well as possible. A very thorough audit has been carried out of the school's contribution to community cohesion. As a result, there is a clear plan for further development and considerable work has been done to ensure that it is promoted excellently. Bearing in mind the thorough analysis of strengths and areas for development and the success in addressing the latter, the school is extremely well placed to continue on the upward path. A parent summed up the school very well, saying, 'Children turn out bright, happy and well rounded, due to the outstanding teaching, care and support they all get from all staff.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents say they are pleased with how well their children are cared for and looked after. They are right as arrangements to ensure that children are kept safe are outstanding. The children work and play happily in a bright and secure environment both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, parents say that their children quickly settle into school. This is because induction procedures are good. In relation to their starting points, achievement is good. Most of the current Reception children are on course to reach average standards by the time they start in Year 1. However, these are weaker in some key areas, such as writing and, to a lesser extent, reading. Children with specific needs are supported very well, enabling them to make the same progress as their classmates. Behaviour is mostly good and personal and social skills are promoted well. Relationships are good. Consequently, children feel secure and demonstrate positive attitudes to life in school and the importance of learning. Children have good opportunities to develop ICT skills and thoroughly enjoy learning using the interactive whiteboards and computers.

Teaching is good. Activities are interesting and exciting and children thoroughly enjoy all they are offered. For example, they really enjoyed their 'archaeological dig' when they excitedly found dinosaur bones in the sand. Occasionally, children are expected to sit and listen for too long and they then have difficulty concentrating. Children have good opportunities to make marks on paper and begin to write letters and words. However, teachers do not always give them suitable guidance to enable them to move to the next step. Basic writing skills are not systematically promoted well. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The system to track children's progress is thorough and enables teachers to keep a track of how children are doing. All adults work well together and have a good idea of how these young children learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by giving a greater focus to the systematic development of children's mark-making and basic writing skills.

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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?	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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South End Infant School, Rushden, NN10 9JU

Thank you so much for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We were really impressed with all your hard work and very much enjoyed talking with you. You told us that you enjoy school a good deal and we are not surprised as your school is outstanding.

These are some of the best things we found about your school.

- You are making excellent progress as you are being taught exceptionally well. You reach standards that are well above average by the time you leave to go to the Junior School.
- You are developing really well into sensible young people. We were really impressed with the work of the school council and all the other things you do to help others.
- All adults look after you extremely well and you told us that you feel very safe when you are in school.
- A very interesting range of things is planned for you to do in lessons. I particularly enjoyed watching the work you were doing with Indian saris and listening to the work on Indian stories.
- Your headteacher and all the staff have excellent plans to make your school even better.

There is just one thing we have suggested should be improved.

- The progress of children in the Reception classes isn't quite as good as in Years 1 and 2. We have suggested that this would improve if these children were helped to do better in writing.

I know you will keep working hard and help your teachers to keep up these standards.

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie Lead inspector