

Sinclair Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 133943 |
| Local Authority | Southampton |
| Inspection number | 328775 |
| Inspection dates | 23–24 June 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Janet Sinclair |

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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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 208 |
| 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 Mike Doling |
| Headteacher | Mrs Debbie Adamson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 June 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Sinclair Road Lordshill Southampton SO16 8GF |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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Telephone number
Fax number

02380 736663
02380 741649

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sinclair is an average-sized primary school. Children from three to five years of age attend the Early Years Foundation Stage, which comprises one Nursery class and one Reception class. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Their needs include specific learning and behavioural difficulties. Pupils are mainly White British, although a few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. More children than is typical nationally join or leave the school at other than the customary times of the year. There has been some recent staffing turbulence, including a reduction in the overall number of teachers. The deputy headteacher is new to her role. Pupils are in mixed-age classes from the Reception Year to Year 5. The school has the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate because there is considerable underachievement in Key Stage 2, which has continued for several years. As a result, standards by the end of Year 6 are exceptionally low in English, particularly in writing, and in mathematics and science. Pupils of all abilities do not make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils with learning difficulties, for the most part, make satisfactory progress towards targets set in their individual education plans but their overall progress is inadequate. Children start in Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those typical of children of this age group. The effective induction and friendly, caring atmosphere enable children to settle well into school routines and help them to become competent learners within the Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

There has been an overall deterioration in the school's effectiveness since the last inspection. This significantly limits its capacity to improve further. Teaching has not had enough impact on pupils' progress over time and is not good enough to tackle the underachievement within the school. All teachers are keen and motivated to bring about improvement, including implementing new initiatives, but there are inconsistencies in how these are carried out. Some initiatives are too recent for their impact or sustainability to be measured. Teaching is not challenging pupils enough to ensure that they make appropriate progress. This is because planning within the mixed-age classes does not match the needs of pupils and their range of abilities.

The curriculum, while engaging pupils' interests more readily through a topic approach, does not address pupils' literacy and numeracy needs in a way that enables them to make better progress and achieve higher standards. Coverage of other subjects is sometimes superficial. The school provides a sound range of after-school sports clubs, visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school. Behaviour is good in lessons and across the school. However, attendance remains low in spite of the school's strenuous efforts to improve it. Relationships are good and pupils feel safe within the school's supportive and caring environment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has been greatly enhanced by the school's involvement in the 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' initiative. This has helped pupils to be more considerate and thoughtful towards each other and also encouraged a better understanding of the needs of others, within both the local and the wider community. Consequently, pupils collaborated well with each other in their work and on shared tasks. Pupils have targets for their learning and marking gives them some guidance on the improvements they need to make. That said, there is a lack of clarity and consistency in the marking, so not all pupils benefit from knowing what they need to do to improve.

The school has a new senior leadership team which is keen and committed to improving the provision for pupils. However, the impact and sustainability of the changes they are making have yet to be proven. A history of instability in staffing, as well as underachievement which

has persisted over several years, remain to be overcome. Weaknesses in tracking systems, which were not addressed until recently, meant that the school did not have a clear view of the extent of the underachievement. This led to leaders having a more positive view of performance, in almost all respects, than the inspection team found. A deficit budget is also constraining developments. Additionally, the reorganisation of classes into mixed-age classes in the middle of the school year had an adverse effect on pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress owing to sound provision, but their attainment remains well below the expected level when they enter Year 1. Children enjoy the activities planned for them. For example, inspectors observed Nursery children enjoying dancing and making music outside, while others in the Reception class worked conscientiously as 'shopkeepers'. Teaching is satisfactory because adults organise a range of child-led and teacher-directed activities, which engage children and promote their learning. However, the way the adults interact with the children and question them during the activities is not as effective as it should be in enhancing children's progress. Overall, the curriculum is planned satisfactorily to ensure continuity in children's learning and the provision of a safe and healthy environment. Regular observations are used appropriately to assess and track children's progress and to plan new work. However, teachers' planning does not sufficiently take into account opportunities for language development or the children's differing range of abilities. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and the satisfactory quality of provision has been maintained through staff changes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, particularly writing, in mathematics and in science in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that teachers across the school raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve, plan work to meet their differing needs and challenge them fully in lessons.
- Improve the curriculum by teaching subjects besides English and mathematics in greater depth.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that all leaders understand fully both the urgency with which standards and achievement need to be raised and their roles in bringing about improvements.
- Take immediate and effective action to ensure that initiatives are implemented consistently and monitor the outcomes rigorously.
- Improve rates of attendance and continue to emphasise to parents the negative impact that absence from school has on their child's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 vary from year to year, but are mainly below average in reading and mathematics and low in writing. They have been exceptionally low in writing for the last two years and only a quarter of current Year 2 pupils are reaching the nationally expected level. These pupils began with a low starting point in Year 1 but, even so, their progress is barely satisfactory in English. Consequently, this is having a negative impact on their learning overall.

At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are exceptionally low, especially in writing, and achievement has been inadequate for several years. Despite intensive support from the local authority this situation has not been tackled effectively; there is underachievement in all year groups. The only exception is in mathematics in Year 6, where strong efforts have ensured that progress is satisfactory in this subject. Much has been put in place recently to support Year 6 pupils, through specific work for small groups and individual tuition, in order to accelerate progress from a low base, and this has reduced the extent of the underachievement.

The school has recently adopted a programme for younger pupils to improve their reading and writing skills. This is intended to help pupils with specific learning difficulties by engaging them more fully through songs, stories and drama. Although pupils are working well through the programme, there is, as yet, little real evidence of impact on standards and progress. Work has also been undertaken to improve standards in mathematics, but the many changes of staff and class groupings have hampered progress in some classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils mainly have good attitudes to work and are positive about school. They have good relationships with staff and with each other, which has a positive impact on their personal development. Pupils' cultural, spiritual, social and moral development is good. The 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' initiative is already having a good impact, providing pupils with a strong sense of right and wrong. Behaviour around the school is good and pupils are polite to each other and to adults. Pupils themselves feel behaviour has improved recently. As one pupil noted, 'There has been a real change lately and behaviour is much better.' Pupils report that there is little bullying and that staff deal with any instances quickly and effectively. When given the opportunity, pupils support and work well with each other, but this was not seen in every class or year group. Although attendance is below average, those who do attend largely enjoy what is on offer. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and safe practices, noting the importance of fruit, vegetables and proteins, plenty of exercise and the safe use of equipment as essential components. The school council has contributed to the school community well through, for example, the development of the school's allotment and collecting money to provide pumps for clean water in poorer countries. However, the lack of progress in their learning and standards in the school means that pupils are not gaining the skills required for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

While lessons seen during the inspection were mostly satisfactory, overall teaching is inadequate. This is because pupils in Key Stage 2 have not made the progress they should have and current teaching is not helping them to overcome gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding quickly enough. Many changes of staff and class groupings have interrupted pupils' learning. The school is only just beginning to settle down with established teaching staff and a secure class structure in place. In the main, lessons are appropriately organised and managed. Relationships are good, so that pupils engage in their learning and enjoy their work. This was particularly noticeable in a good lesson in Year 6, where the teaching was lively. The teacher had high expectations for pupils' learning and made excellent use of their willingness to

collaborate and work with a partner to enhance learning. That said, in other classes staff do not always fully challenge pupils. Work is not planned well enough to meet their needs and abilities and teachers' questions do not challenge and develop pupils' thinking. These factors hold back progress. Teaching assistants make a sound contribution to pupils' learning through the support they provide for small groups and individuals, particularly those with learning difficulties. Their contribution during whole-class introductions is often limited. Teachers mark the pupils' work, but marking is not consistent or effective enough to help pupils know how to improve and achieve higher standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is appropriately planned to cover all subjects through a topic-based approach. Subject plans set out the expectations for each year group. However, these are not used well to ensure a good match of work to the needs of the different abilities represented within each of the mixed-age classes. This has a negative impact on provision for literacy and numeracy. The use of topic books also makes it difficult to track pupils' progress, particularly in science, or to give pupils a clear idea of the progress they have made. There is evidence of interesting and stimulating topic work, such as art and design work based on Doctor Who, but work in pupils' books indicates a fairly superficial coverage of some subjects. Personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' social development. At lunchtime, pupils eat in small groups together with an adult. This has helped pupils to develop their social skills and improve their behaviour. The satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and the strong emphasis on physical education within the school promote healthy exercise and have led to the Activemark award. Visits, such as those to Southampton City Art Gallery, enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There is a positive and caring climate throughout the school, which contributes well to pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with issues effectively should any problems occur. The school meets all current requirements for safeguarding its pupils. Robust recruitment procedures are in place and all required checks are carefully carried out. Attendance is inadequate but there are good procedures in place to follow up any absences. External links with other agencies are good, assisting pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties. Pupils' learning needs are beginning to be identified and plans and procedures developed to ensure that they are met. It is too early to judge the long-term effectiveness of these initiatives. Tracking, monitoring and target-setting systems are beginning to drive planning but they have not been implemented fully or consistently across the school. As a result, pupils are not always clear about their targets and are not sure how to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leaders have developed a caring and supportive environment for pupils so that they feel safe and confident of adult support. Initiatives such as 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' and the Virtual Learning Environment have had a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of school.

However, steps taken to improve pupils' progress have had very limited impact except in Year 6. Leaders and managers have received support from the local authority for several years but have failed to secure any real improvements in standards or pupils' progress. The new leadership team has begun to bring about change. For example, the recently created tracking system has helped the school to see the extent of the underachievement and start to take positive action to rectify it. School leaders are beginning to evaluate the performance of individual members of staff and use their findings to improve the quality of provision. However, it is essential that the school prioritises areas for improvement urgently, implements its plans rigorously and carefully evaluates the outcomes. There is also work to be done to help all leaders understand the urgency with which issues need to be addressed and the part that they play in bringing about improvements. Because many of the changes are very recent, there is insufficient evidence of impact to show that the school has the capacity to improve. There remains a great deal of underachievement across Key Stage 2 and no clear indication of improvement. Historically, governance has been inadequate because it has not challenged the school sufficiently. The new governing body is aware of all the issues the school faces and is firmly placed to challenge, monitor and support the school and its leadership team, but it is too early to judge the impact of this.

The leadership team has produced a strategy for promoting community cohesion and evaluated its impact. This is beginning to develop pupils' understanding and learning, as well as extending effective links between the school and the wider community. The school has good links with external partners and uses them to enhance the lives and education of its pupils. Much work has been done to develop the partnership with parents through the Parent Voice group, a reading homework scheme and the school website. The few parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were mainly positive about the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | |
|---|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 4 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 3 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 4 |

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? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 4 |
| 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 | 4 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 4 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 4 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

Leadership and management

| | |
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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 4 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 4 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 4 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 4 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 4 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | Yes |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

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

15 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sinclair Primary and Nursery School, Southampton, SO16 8GF

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and were particularly impressed by your considerate behaviour towards each other and the way you work well together. We found that your school cares well for you. We are pleased to know that you feel safe and trust the adults taking care of you.

We have decided that your school requires special measures. This means that, although your school does some things well, there are weaknesses in some important areas, which it needs help to sort out. Your school has been asked to improve these things as quickly as possible. You and your teachers will get plenty of help to carry out these improvements and inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress that you are making. I am sure you will want to help with improvements by working as hard as you can.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- help you to do much better in English, especially in writing, and in mathematics and science, by ensuring that teachers give you work that is at the right level for you
- ensure that teachers have high expectations of what you can do and challenge you to do your very best in all your work
- make sure that you cover all subjects in enough depth and at the right level
- ensure that senior leaders check that changes they have introduced to help you do better are introduced by all the teachers and are working well
- encourage your parents to send you to school every day unless you are unwell, so that you can benefit from all the activities on offer.

You can help by attending school every day and by doing your best all the time.

We enjoyed talking to you and wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Janet Sinclair

Lead Inspector