

Southdown Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109004
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	337194
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bailey
Headteacher	Teresa Austin
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2010
School address	Mount Road Bath BA2 1LG
Telephone number	01225 424761
Fax number	01225 334181
Email address	southdown_jun@bathnes.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed six different teachers. They held meetings with pupils, staff, governors and the school improvement advisor. □ They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation, records of governing body meetings and the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and the school improvement plan, and analysed the responses of 29 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and other written responses from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the school's effectiveness in raising attainment in English
- the progress made by groups of pupils throughout the school, particularly that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the challenge offered to more-able pupils and its effect on their attainmentthe impact of the school's measures to improve the consistency of teaching and learning across the school.

Information about the school

Southdown is smaller than most junior schools. Most pupils are of White British background. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. About one in three pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is higher than average, the largest group being pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties. The number of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is higher than average. About a quarter of the pupils attend the school's breakfast club regularly. Pupils also have access to an after-school provision nearby, which is not managed by the school. The school has a number of awards, including accreditation by Investors in People, for the fourth time, and the Basic Skills award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has shown a good capacity for identifying weaknesses and taking effective steps to improve them. This has been shown by the improvements since the last inspection in pupils' writing, the raising of teachers' skills and in the provision of a more exciting and stimulating curriculum. The school's self-evaluation of its own performance, though, is rather cautious, tending to reflect the views of others rather than its own realistic beliefs of what it provides for pupils. The school's greatest strength is the shared desire of the whole staff to care for the pupils, especially those most in need of support. This helps all groups of pupils to make good progress and achieve well, especially in their personal and social development. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have been making good progress for several years. Pupils enjoy going to school, have a good level of enthusiasm for learning and respect the staff. Their positive opinion of school is shared by nearly all parents and carers, one of whom commented, 'The school listens to the views of children, and gives them support which helps their confidence to grow.'

By the time they leave the school in Year 6, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is broadly average. This is an improvement in English, where the school has introduced new strategies in reading and writing, which are having a beneficial effect. The school has recognised inconsistencies in teaching and in the use of assessment in the past and has taken steps to improve both areas. This has led to some improvement, but the school accepts that even more rigorous and regular monitoring is necessary to maintain recent improvements. The school is swift to pinpoint and provide for the personal needs of pupils, but teachers' short-term planning sometimes fails to make sufficient use of good assessment data, so that progress becomes uneven for some pupils.

□ Teaching is nearly always good or better. It is strengthened by the effective contributions of teaching assistants, especially for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The personalised curriculum gives pupils a wide range of interesting and exciting learning experiences, although they are not always given sufficient opportunity to develop their writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects. The headteacher, through her compassion and care for pupils, and the deputy headteacher, with his teaching and analytical skills, make a contrasting but effective leadership team. They, with other leaders and a good staff team, enable a good development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Also, they encourage pupils to contribute to the school and local community, although the provision to develop pupils' knowledge of national and global cultures is still developing.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Tighten the evaluation of learning by:
 - ensuring that existing practice in the monitoring of teaching is even more rigorous so that the progress of pupils is consistent in all years
 - using assessment data more regularly and effectively in short-term planning for the next stages of pupils' learning.
- Provide more opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to write creatively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The response of pupils to their learning is positive and many are enthusiastic in wanting to contribute in lessons. They are lively and friendly and their learning is best when they can participate in and enjoy their activities. This was seen when a group of pupils in Year 6, learning about area, were challenged to plan and design animal enclosures in a zoo, using their mathematical skills. These aspects of learning are being introduced through the school, in order to raise attainment, especially of more-able pupils. This is proving successful, as more pupils are reaching the higher levels of attainment, especially in science and mathematics. Attainment for the last three years has been generally average, although in 2009, attainment in English was below average. The school has taken effective steps to improve reading and writing and continues to do so. Although writing has improved, the school is still not satisfied that writing skills are good enough at higher levels. Present pupils in Year 6 entered the school with below-average attainment in all subjects, but are now attaining at average levels. This indicates good progress and achievement, which is being reflected in other year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, have made consistently good progress for several years.

Relationships throughout the school are good, which contributes strongly to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils in all classes indicated in their most recent questionnaires that they feel safe in school and that the school helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle. □ A few pupils mention odd incidents of bullying, but say that staff deal with this immediately, as one pupil declaimed, □ 'That sort of behaviour is totally unacceptable!' They accept responsibilities such as playground leaders readily and are proud of the contributions they make through the school council. Pupils are involved in many local community activities and charity fundraising efforts. Their attendance remains stubbornly at average levels, in spite of many procedures and rewards to encourage the better attendance of a small number of persistent absentees. The great majority of pupils have very good attendance. Pupils are steadily developing their basic skills in preparation for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good for most of the time. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage pupils very well, leading to consistently good behaviour. This, combined with pupils' good attitudes, leads to a strong partnership for learning. Teachers are improving their questioning skills, which in turn are leading to more opportunities for extended speaking by pupils to each other and adults. Teachers are not afraid to challenge their pupils, as observed in several lessons in Years 5 and 6 when pupils were asked to study the effectiveness of persuasive arguments about animal welfare. The assessment of pupil progress has improved under the guidance of the deputy headteacher. Whilst the systems are good, the use of data is not yet included by every teacher with sufficient regularity in short-term lesson planning. Most pupils know what they have to do to improve their learning, because marking is constructive, and all pupils have realistic learning targets.

The school has a well-balanced curriculum, which is based upon the use of stimulating stories and texts, and many outside visits. Good practical learning opportunities are frequently provided, such as swimming in the school's learner-pool, and the curriculum is well matched to the needs of the pupils. There are good partnerships with other schools and Bath Spa University, which promote good enrichment, such as learning Spanish and playing musical instruments. A range of extra-curricular clubs are popular and pupils in Year 6 have appreciated the opportunity to organise their own clubs on

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Friday afternoons.

The school provides a caring and welcoming environment for all pupils. Staff are particularly good at developing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence, which noticeably contributes to their better learning. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident of the adults around them. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and utilises many outside support agencies. Provision for child protection and risk assessment is meticulous. Transition arrangements between schools in Years 3 and 6 are good. The breakfast club offers good subsidised provision regularly to a significant number of pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher gives an effective lead to staff in developing a continually improving school. Her main ambitions are to improve learning and to provide a strong pastoral culture in order to give pupils, especially those most in need, the best care and education possible. These aims are shared strongly by the whole school community, including governors, and this results in a thoroughly inclusive school, where all pupils are provided with many opportunities for their academic and personal development. Leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination effectively. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who deals with his many responsibilities effectively and is a good role model, as a classroom practitioner and for pupils. Other leaders, teachers and teaching assistants make a mutually supportive and well motivated team, leading to a friendly, lively and enthusiastic school community.

The recent problems in attainment in English have led the school to review and then introduce new strategies with some success, leading to clear improvement in reading and, more recently, in writing skills throughout the school. Leaders have realised through their monitoring of teaching and learning that the progress of pupils can be patchy. Steps have been taken to ensure greater consistency in teaching, and leaders are planning to continue this approach with increasing rigour. The governors, who have a good variety of skills including a very experienced chair, strongly support the school's efforts for improvement and continually work to improve school resources. They ensure that statutory provision for safeguarding and health and safety is of good quality and regularly reviewed.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is good. The staff works hard to

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

encourage parents and carers to work with them in the education and care of their children. Partnerships to promote the learning and especially the well-being of pupils are good. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. It has good links locally and the development of national and global links is growing. The school deploys its resources, particularly the staff, effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

About a quarter of parents and carers responded to the questionnaires. A large majority have very positive views of the school. All feel that teaching is good and most agree that their children are safe and healthy and that the leadership of the school is good. Importantly, virtually all are happy with their children's experiences in school. Typically, a parent/carer commented, 'The school is very welcoming, the door is always open, and the school cares for learning and the child's needs across the board.' A small number of parents and carers expressed concerns that they are not helped to support their child's learning and do not know enough about their progress. The inspection team find that the school provides much information to parents about progress, and that teachers offer considerable guidance on how parents and carers can help their children. No parent or carer strongly disagrees with any statement in the questionnaire.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 113 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southdown Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	38	14	48	4	14	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	41	46	55	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	21	17	59	6	21	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	28	17	59	4	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	38	18	62	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	28	15	52	6	21	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	34	17	59	2	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	31	15	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	31	17	59	2	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	34	15	52	4	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	28	17	59	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	38	16	55	2	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	38	17	59	1	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southdown Junior School, Bath BA2 1LG

Your school gives you a good education, cares for you very well, and keeps you safe.

We would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited you recently.

We liked hearing about how much you like school, and all your special trips, and your school swimming pool. I do not think I have ever had so many children wanting to come and talk to me! The team thinks you behave very well, and was pleased to hear that members of the public, when Years 3 and 4 visited Englishcombe, thought so too. It was good to hear that you like your teachers, and that your parents are pleased with what the school does for you. You reach the standards expected of you for your age in English and mathematics, and you are well taught. Most of you have very good attendance, although a few of you need to come to school more often. The school has good leaders who try to do the very best for you during your time here. We think that the school could get even better, with your help, and so we have suggested that they:

- make sure that teaching is good all the time so that you continue to make good progress
- give you more chances to write with imagination about everything you do in school
- use their knowledge of you in their planning to make sure you do not find your work too easy or too hard.

We think you can help them to do this, and really hope you continue to enjoy school and do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Rod Braithwaite Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.