

# South Molton Infants' School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113168
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	338113
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alex Baxter

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	137
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Trudie Agate
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pat Fewings
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 January 2007
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Approximately half of the time was spent looking at pupils' learning. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and an assembly, observed break, lunchtime and after-school activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities was also evaluated. In addition, 22 parental questionnaires and 14 staff questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the development of pupils' skills in relation to differing starting points, backgrounds and needs, to determine whether teaching, especially the use of assessment/target-setting, is suitably challenging and effective and ensures that all groups of learners are doing equally well
- the reasons for the apparent success of provision in supporting boys' writing and how this reflects the ability of leadership and management to bring about improvement
- the effect of the school's specific aim to strengthen the learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

This is a small infants' school. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is above that normally expected and has recently been mostly related to pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Such needs mainly feature speech, language and communication learning difficulties. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage initially on a part time basis. They are taught in two Reception classes. Amongst others, the school holds Healthy School and Investors in People awards. The school runs an after-school club, which parents pay for, and which also caters for pupils from two other local schools.

**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

South Molton Infants' is a good school. Under the inspirational leadership of an experienced headteacher, the school is steering an effective course through a period of staffing instability. The school has an exceptionally calm and welcoming ethos and sustains a few outstanding features. These include excellent pastoral care provided by the staff of the school and very successful links with specialist colleagues and the local community. These combine very supportively to promote the pupils' excellent contributions to their learning and adoption of healthy lifestyles.

Effective provision in Reception, which now extends across two classes, gives children a good start. In particular, staff are particularly successful in laying the foundation for the children's very positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. From levels of skill that are below those normally expected of their age, by the time they leave, Year 2 pupils' attainment is broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The issues of the previous inspection, namely, pupils' handwriting and the performance of pupils of high ability, have been tackled effectively. All groups of pupils now achieve well, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. These developments, together with good self-evaluation and an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, show a good capacity for continued improvement.

Early identification of the pupils' individual needs, or as the headteacher puts it, 'Getting it right at the beginning', lies at the heart of rising levels of attainment and informs good teaching and learning. For example, following assessments which showed that underdeveloped speech and language skills on entry often led to weaknesses in pupils' writing, especially by boys, the school began tackling these earlier and with increasing success. First, by working more closely with feeder pre-schools and second, by more specifically developing pupils' communication and writing skills through emphasising speaking and listening. These strategies continue through the school and have been combined within a good curriculum by the development of topics, such as 'Jungles'. Such provision enthuses pupils by providing interest and relevance. Additionally, the school has now recognised the need to move the focus to reading, so that, as in writing and mathematics, the number of pupils attaining above average standards increases.

Good teaching is underpinned by the staff's secure first-hand knowledge of individual pupils, gleaned from close questioning, and by their good oral feedback to pupils. In response, pupils relate very warmly to adults and their clear effort to give of their best really strengthens their learning. The use of assessment to support learning is currently satisfactory. This is because teachers' written marking of the pupils' work and their use of class targets are less effective in involving pupils in their own learning and in showing

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individual pupils what they have to do to improve. Nevertheless, frequent contact between staff means that information from pupils' assessments is shared effectively. Currently, the school is updating the way these assessments are recorded so that new subject leaders can monitor their subjects to better effect.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring the quality of teachers' written marking and use of targets to a level which matches the high quality of their oral guidance and so involve pupils more effectively in evaluating and promoting their own learning.
- Complete the task of making the system for tracking pupils' progress more accessible so that subject leaders are better placed to monitor pupils' achievement and promote improvement, for example in reading.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Inspectors observed that in lessons, which often involved specific intervention support by teaching assistants, pupils enjoyed their learning and made good progress through the school. This applied equally to all groups across the range of ability and backgrounds. Pupils' attainment, evident in work in their books, responses in lessons and in national assessments, is broadly average in English, mathematics and science by Year 2 and represents good achievement. Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are most successful when they are enthused and challenged by teachers to share their ideas. This was seen, to good effect, for example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 1, where pupils eagerly explained how they correctly identified hidden numbers on a hundred square.

Many pupils show good skills in speaking and listening and are very willing learners. Pupils enjoy working together and do well, for example, when using computers. They say, 'We love discussing ideas as carpet partners.' An increasing number of pupils are attaining higher than average levels in mathematics and, because of a successful whole-school focus and on boys' learning, in writing, too. This is not yet the case in reading. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do particularly well to attain average standards. Several pupils, especially those with complex communication needs, despite good progress, have yet to develop expected literacy and numeracy skills, by the time they leave school.

Pupils behave well, feel safe and enjoy school. This is reflected in their good attendance, wholehearted contributions to school life and willingness to take on responsibility. Pupils are considerate to one another and respond particularly well to the caring staff. The pupils' excellent adoption of healthy lifestyles is seen in their knowledge of healthy eating and by their enthusiasm for exercise, especially in their 'Annual Bike Week', for example. Pupils show good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for their age, but their awareness of multicultural Britain is less secure. By the time pupils leave the school, their very positive attitudes and good achievement prepare them well for the future.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers and their skilled assistants give clear instructions to the pupils and share learning intentions at the beginning of lessons. All adults strongly encourage pupils to think for themselves during discussions. In a class assembly, for example, pupils were able to reflect about their own experiences meaningfully during the lighting of a candle. As a result, pupils learn to follow instructions, think carefully and apply themselves industriously to their learning. At times, though, introductory discussions continue for too long, a few pupils begin to lose interest and learning slows. Over the past year, teachers have improved the way they challenge more able pupils and motivate boys, for example, by developing speech to promote writing and by using information and communication technology (ICT). In Reception the practical nature of a 'fruit and movement game', whereby children identified different letter sounds, proved successful in enthusing a few reticent boys.

Pupils benefit from a high level of pastoral care, which safeguards pupils across all aspects of provision, including child care in after-school clubs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-considered intervention, which is

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

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often supported by specialist support. As a consequence, pupils across the range of ability feel safe, enjoy school and make equally good progress in relation to their needs. The way teachers and teaching assistants question pupils and give helpful oral advice to pupils to move learning forward are significant strengths in all parts of the school. Work is marked regularly, but the symbols and the class targets given to pupils are not as successful in enabling them as individual learners by showing them what they have to do next to improve.

The school's effective curriculum promotes the pupils' good personal qualities. Planned activities include an effective emphasis on numeracy, literacy and ICT and on themes which develop skills by linking subjects. Regular visits to places of interest, such as the nearby 'Honey Farm', and a good range of extra-curricular activities including the ICT and 'Schools Out' clubs, further enrich pupils' learning, especially their excellent adoption of healthy lifestyles.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Self-evaluation, decision making and the drive for improvement are good and underpin the pupils' continuing good academic and excellent personal achievement. This is because priorities are carefully considered in a comprehensive school improvement plan that is well informed by accurate evaluations of the school's provision, performance and needs. Current temporary teaching arrangements mean that the leadership of some subjects, for example mathematics, is shared between senior leaders. Improving team leadership, which includes a strong lead from the headteacher and good governance, is addressing this issue. The school is also updating its system for tracking pupils' progress to further support the work of subject leadership, but this task is not yet complete. Even so, all staff and governors are diligent in getting to know pupils as individuals and in securing equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination. As a result, strengths continue in safeguarding pupils' welfare and in pastoral care. Both of these aspects are supported by excellent partnerships with outside specialists, such as the educational psychologist. The school promotes community cohesion well and lies at the heart of its local community. The school hosts frequent events and regular lettings to local organisations and develops the pupils' understanding of the global community effectively through its topic based curriculum and charitable activities. The school has plans to link with more diverse British communities and recognises that bringing the national aspect

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of community cohesion to the same high level is 'work in progress'.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The children's skills on entry vary each year, but are mostly below those normally expected for children of this age, especially in speech, language and communication. Children settle confidently because they receive good teaching, including in a new class where the youngest children are being inducted on a part time basis into school life. Children's welfare is safeguarded extremely well. Good leadership and management and supportive links with parents and pre-school providers also ensure that children attend regularly and soon learn to give of their best. Staff match work well to the children's needs and provide effective support across a good range of mostly practical learning activities. As a result, children behave well and make good progress, particularly in speaking and listening and in social development. Activities include those chosen by the children themselves, for example playing with small mobile toys, and others, such as placing number cards in a 'snake sequence', led by adults. At times, opportunities to develop new learning through the children's own choices are missed and this limits their independence. On entry to Year 1, most children reach the expected levels of attainment. However, while a few children exceed expectations, the skills of several from low starting points remain below those expected.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Several parents also expressed particularly appreciative comments about the good leadership and management of the school and how well their children are helped to have a healthy lifestyle. A very small minority of parents indicated concerns related to the instability in teaching staff. Inspectors were mindful of these parental concerns and examined them during the inspection. They concluded that the school is managing a period of staff change well to secure effective provision and the future success of the school.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Molton Infants' 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.

The inspection team received 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 137 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	55	8	36	1	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	55	8	36	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	27	13	59	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	32	12	55	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	32	12	55	1	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	32	12	55	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	45	9	41	0	0	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)	8	36	11	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	23	16	73	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	23	11	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	32	12	55	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	41	9	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	36	12	55	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



14 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Molton Infants' School, Devon, EX36 3BA

Thank you for your kind welcome during our visit to your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you, especially the group of pupils from Years 1 and 2 who told me all about your school. We were particularly impressed by your willingness to learn, and your healthy and safe living, and by the very caring support you receive from all the staff. We agree with you, most of your parents and with your teachers that South Molton Infants' is a good school.

These are some of the other main things we found:

- You make good progress because the staff teach you well and use your ideas to promote good learning.
- Most of you develop skills that match those expected for your age, and an increasing number of you are doing particularly well in speaking and listening, and in writing and using computers.
- You attend well and say that you feel safe and enjoy school because of the good range of activities provided for you.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors run the school well. They work closely with other schools and specialist staff to make sure that you achieve well.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- improve the quality of teachers' marking and use of targets so that you know what you have to do next to get better
- update the way your progress is checked so that teachers are more able to help you to improve, particularly in reading.

Keep giving of your best and good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead Inspector

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