

Solent Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116193
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	338756
Inspection dates	1–2 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mick Pye

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	361
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Stead
Headteacher	Julia Knowles
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent approximately a third of the available time observing 14 lessons and visiting three other lessons. Eleven teachers were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors also observed the school's work, pupil progress data, development planning, self-evaluation records, curriculum and lesson plans and documentation relating to health and safety and safeguarding matters. A total of 120 parent questionnaires were scrutinised along with 21 staff and 113 pupil questionnaires.

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

- Progress and attainment in English, mathematics and science, especially for girls in mathematics and pupils with special educational needs.
- How well leaders have brought about improvements to provision in mathematics, particularly in terms of teaching and the curriculum.
- Whether teachers use assessment and other information to plan work that sufficiently challenges pupils of different abilities. The apparent strengths in aspects of Every Child Matters, pupils' personal development, and the care, guidance and support for pupils.

Information about the school

The pupils in this larger than average junior school come from a predominantly White British background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of these pupils have moderate and specific learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has been nationally recognised through the Healthy Schools and Artsmark Awards.

A privately run after-school club is situated on the site which caters for children aged 4 to 11 years. This is subject to a separate inspection.

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

The school provides a good standard of education. It has outstanding aspects in the extent to which pupils feel safe, behave, and in their understanding of how to keep healthy. This reflects the impact of the work carried out to qualify for the two national awards. Pupils say they feel listened to and enjoy school. Around the school there is a positive feeling among pupils of mutual respect and a willingness to help each other out. For example, they willingly share play equipment at break times. Parents' positive views were expressed in comments such as, 'A good school ethos encourages children to be independent and the needs of the whole child are taken into account.'

From their starting points pupils make good progress and attainment in the current Year 6 is above average. Attainment in mathematics is average and this is a focus for the school. New approaches to the teaching of problem solving in mathematics have been introduced but it is too early to see the full impact of such changes. In recent years boys' performance in mathematics has been better than that of girls, except at the higher levels. This gender gap is closing. Teaching is good overall but there exist inconsistencies which slow the progress of some pupils. Where progress is good the secure subject knowledge of teachers enables them to plan work that challenges pupils appropriately. In lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, there are missed opportunities during whole class sessions, particularly in mathematics, to encourage pupils to raise queries and to fully explain their answers. Not all teachers use sufficiently challenging questions to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Inconsistencies exist in the quality of marking; there is a need for clearer guidance for pupils on how to improve their work.

Pupils rightly say they have varied, enjoyable activities provided through the good curriculum. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers; a consequence of good support by teaching assistants. The school tracks their progress well. However in lessons, the particular needs of such pupils are not always fully met because not all of their targets are sufficiently specific or linked to achievable time limits.

At subject level, some aspects of management require further development. These coordinators monitor well through work sampling and checking planning, and some visit lessons. However, not all subject coordinators have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of pupils' attainment and progress in their subject. There is a well-established cycle of self-evaluation that has led to significant whole-school developments. For example, a greater proportion of pupils are now attaining the higher levels in science. The introduction of a comprehensive pupil progress tracking system makes a significant contribution to ensuring equal opportunities for different groups of pupils. Also, the

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successful trialling of online home-school links, showing progress and attendance, is contributing well to partnerships with parents and carers. This, along with improved achievement in the 2009 national tests, reflects a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' standards and progress in mathematics by eradicating the inconsistencies in teaching through:
 - encouraging pupils to raise questions and fully explain their answers during whole class sessions
 - ensuring that all teachers use challenging questioning
 - the use of sharper target setting for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - marking that consistently shows pupils how to improve their work.
- Sharpen the leadership skills of subject coordinators by ensuring that all:
 - have a clear picture of pupils' attainment and progress in their area of responsibility
 - carry out rigorous analysis of the information gained from their monitoring
 - development plans clearly show how the subject supports the priorities in the whole school improvement plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and have good attendance levels, which together with their behaviour contribute to their good progress. Year 6 pupils in a physical education lesson worked hard during the warm-up and showed enthusiasm and enjoyment when practising their throwing skills in small groups in netball. Year 3 pupils settled well in a religious education lesson, quickly tackling the task of letter writing. Year 6 pupils in an English lesson responded very positively to the challenge to review their work and improve on it. In 2009, Year 6 pupils made good progress and attained standards that overall were well above average, reflecting attainment in English and science. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs progressed in line with their peers. Such achievements, together with the opportunities older pupils have to run clubs for younger children, help prepare them well for later life. Their contribution to the community is good. School councillors make meaningful decisions such as those concerning the environmental area. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with pupils' understanding of the social and moral implications of the Haiti earthquake prompting them to raise funds for charity. Nevertheless, there are missed opportunities to promote reflection and thinking time in lessons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good use of modern technology, such as that observed in a Year 3 numeracy lesson, motivates pupils and helps give lessons pace. Very good relationships are established which result in pupils wanting to engage with their learning and answer questions. Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to build on pupils' answers, and pupils clearly benefit from this. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching and the use of assessment which, at times, slow progress. For example, teachers give good, detailed feedback to pupils after their extended writing assessments, but the next step in the pupils' learning is not always identified in other work. Good attention is paid to ascertaining the prior knowledge of pupils and building on this in lessons. The curriculum, including in mathematics and writing, is increasingly based on the learning of skills. Pupils acknowledge the good enrichment opportunities that they have. Residential trips, such as the one to Minstead, are popular and contribute well to pupils' personal and social development. Homework, recorded in the learning logs, is enhancing well the knowledge of pupils. There are outstanding elements to the care, guidance and support of pupils, which are good overall. The provision of health facilities benefits pupils and their families. Clear and specific support for vulnerable pupils contributes to their excellent progress towards their personal goals. The school adopts a very proactive approach to seeking help from a wide range of external agencies for pupils requiring additional support. Pupils settle quickly and well because of excellent transition

¹ 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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arrangements. However, occasionally targets set for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not sufficiently precise.

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 and senior leaders have effectively shared the vision for improvement. For example, there is a consistent and successful approach to pupil management which results in them being fully aware of their responsibilities. Staff clearly understand where the school is heading and subject coordinators know how they can contribute; for example, the introduction in mathematics of 'passports' which identify for staff and pupils the expected knowledge of pupils at particular stages. However, managers of subjects other than English, mathematics and science do not carry out a sufficiently rigorous analysis of the findings of their monitoring, and subject development plans do not always show how whole school priorities are supported. The monitoring of teaching is well established and teachers benefit from detailed oral and written feedback, although inconsistencies remain, particularly in mathematics. The governing body discharges its statutory duties well. Governors have a good understanding of the school. They challenge the school. Safeguarding and health and safety matters are addressed well and documentation and policies are regularly reviewed. The school is inclusive, and uses strategies such as Shine Week to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to show their talents; as one parent wrote, 'Our child loves singing and dancing and the school has given her many opportunities to develop and enjoy all aspects of performing.' The Consensus Day, where various interested parties were invited to contribute to the school's community cohesion programme, was very successful in focusing the schools' developmental work in this area. The school is keen to build on this and is aware that there is more to do in measuring the impact of its community cohesion work.

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	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers hold positive views of the school. They are particularly supportive over the safety of their child and the degree to which the school encourages healthy lifestyles. There were some concerns over the rate of pupils' progress. However inspectors found progress to be good, although, on occasions, it slows because of inconsistencies in teaching. Parents mostly believe behaviour to be good. A small minority had concerns about the homework 'learning logs' and the school is going to look at how it can provide further support for parents in this area. Twenty per cent of the completed questionnaires stated that the school does not take account of their suggestions. This was discussed with the school and inspectors believe that the school, particularly through the parent partnership group, gives good opportunities for consultation.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	48	56	47	6	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	56	53	44	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	47	52	43	11	9	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	41	55	46	15	16	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	47	39	59	49	12	10	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	35	72	60	7	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	41	57	48	9	8	1	1
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)	46	38	53	44	16	13	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	0	38	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	38	62	52	5	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	33	49	41	20	17	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	46	38	56	47	10	8	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	48	43	44	9	8	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">■ 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.



3 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Solent Junior School, Portsmouth PO6 1HJ

Thank you for your kind welcome during our recent visit to your school. We listened carefully to what you had to say. We judge your school to be good.

There are some excellent things about your school. You and your parents agree that the school contributes exceptionally well to ensuring that you know how to stay healthy and safe. Your behaviour is excellent. Well done!

You also told us that you enjoy learning, and the good teaching you get helps you progress well. You do particularly well in English and science. In mathematics we have asked that your school makes sure that all lessons in this subject are as good.

You have a good variety of activities to do during lessons and elsewhere. You obviously enjoy going on the residential trips and attending clubs such as gardening. You make a good contribution to your community – raising funds for charity, and your school councillors and senior pupils give good help to the adults to run the school.

Your headteacher and other adults want the school to get even better. We have asked them to make sure that all subjects support the improvements the school wants to make, for example in mathematics. We have also asked that subject coordinators look more closely at your progress and the effect of any changes they introduce.

Thank you again for your help. On behalf of the inspection team I wish you all well for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye

Lead inspector

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