

Southtown Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121010
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339827
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2010
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Karma Wensley
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Glendinning
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2006
School address	Tamworth Lane Southtown Great Yarmouth
Telephone number	01493 653908
Fax number	01493 445460
Email address	head@southtown.norfolk.sch.uk

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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

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by nine different staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Inspection questionnaires were received from staff and from 33 parents and carers.

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

- how consistently pupils make progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 and whether this is helping to raise levels of attainment
- how consistent and effective the teaching is and how well staff use assessment to plan work for pupils at the right level
- the effectiveness of school leaders, including governors, in raising achievement
- how successful the school has been in promoting better attendance among pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized infant school. At the last inspection, prior to local reorganisation in 2008, this was a First school with pupils up to and including Year 3. It serves a socially and economically diverse residential area in Great Yarmouth. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The great majority of these have speech and language difficulties. Of the others, most have behaviour, emotional and/or social difficulties, autism or moderate learning difficulties. The number of pupils in the main school with statements of special educational needs is high. In addition, the school hosts a Specialist Resource Base which caters for eight pupils with significant speech and language difficulties. All of these pupils also have statements of special educational needs and receive, on average, two terms of intensive support at the Southtown unit before returning to their local school. The current headteacher has been in post for just over five terms.

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 well for its pupils and community. Parents and carers recognise the school's commitment to pupils' well-being and personal development. Consequently, most pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and feel very safe. Pupils build good social skills, show positive attitudes to learning, behave well and have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Attendance figures are adversely affected by a small core of persistent non-attenders and, recently, by some significant bouts of illness. However, this does not have an impact upon the good progress of most pupils who attend regularly. The school works hard to support pupils with a wide range of needs, including those with behavioural and emotional difficulties and those with speech and language disorders. The Specialist Resource Base provides effective specialist teaching for pupils with speech and language disorders to ensure that they make good progress.

Children make good progress through Reception, from their low starting points on entry. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and this is reflected in steadily rising standards over recent years. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is now broadly average. This represents a significant improvement on the previous low attainment. The good curriculum promotes increasingly sound basic skills in literacy and numeracy and provides well for those with additional learning needs through the deployment of skilled teaching assistants. Extra-curricular provision is good, while other aspects, such as the nurture groups and the Forest School, contribute strongly to pupils' good personal development.

There is established good practice in most aspects of marking and assessment. Teachers use assessment well to check learning and to plan lessons. Group targets for improvement are used effectively to promote improved progress.

Effective leadership and a clear sense of direction underpin the significant recent improvements. As a result of training, governance has improved and governors are now in a position to both challenge and support the school. There are developing links with other schools and the school makes very good use of specialist services, for example, to support language development. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to learn about the diversity of life in the United Kingdom. The school has good capacity for improvement because self-evaluation is accurate. Pupils' progress has improved and attainment has risen at the end of Year 2. There are effective systems to support pupils' personal development and to ensure that their educational needs are met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work, in co-operation with parents the local authority and support services, to

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ensure that those pupils currently identified as having high levels of absence, attend school much more frequently.

- Sustain current strategies to ensure that pupils experience teaching of a consistently high quality in all classes across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment has risen steadily since 2007 and, although slightly higher in mathematics than in reading or writing, is now broadly average by the end of Year 2. Despite very low standards on entry, pupils make increasingly good progress through the school. This reflects raised expectations, in tandem with the school's proactive approach to challenging social and emotional barriers to learning. The school's strong emphasis on developing communication skills and specialist interventions in Years 1 and 2 provide well for those pupils with speech and language deficits who are included in mainstream lessons. Pupils in the Specialist Resource Base make good progress in their personal and academic development because teachers evaluate their needs thoroughly and introduce effective interventions which support steady improvement in their speaking skills. Other pupils with significant additional learning needs make good progress because of the effective support they receive. Thorough tracking, specific small group teaching and a nurturing environment combine to promote good progress. The school supports the small number of pupils whose learning is affected through persistent absence and evaluates the impact of additional support to ensure that it is effective.

In lessons, pupils' learning was good because activities were well matched to pupils' needs. This was a strong feature of Specialist Resource Base lessons and also in Year 2 where the good level of adult support enabled the teacher to provide a wide range of literacy tasks which were pitched at just the right level to move learning on. More able pupils often work independently, and also benefit from effective specialist enrichment sessions. Some Year 2 pupils, for example, were engaging with the rich potential of language through introductory sessions in Latin, while others were learning the basics of chess.

The school's calm, positive ethos promotes a strong sense of belonging. Pupils really enjoy school and their good behaviour is reflected in the very few exclusions recently. The school council plays an active part in school life and provides a good forum for pupils' views. Older pupils demonstrate good social skills, eagerly accept responsibility and act as playground 'buddies'. It is to the school's credit that learning and progress are good overall and standards in Year 2 have continued to rise.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Although a small amount of inadequate teaching remains, high expectations and effective management of pupils' behaviour sustain a very positive learning environment and contribute well to rising standards. Relationships are a strength and underpin pupils' good behaviour and their mature attitudes to learning. Teachers promote opportunities for pupils to work independently, so that they develop skills in organising and recording their work. They challenge pupils effectively through asking questions which invite an extended response. This was a feature of a successful science lesson in the Specialist Resource Base, where pupils recounted the stages by which they had selected, prepared and planted flowers. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support learners, both those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who learn quickly. The marking of work consistently informs pupils how well they are doing and how they can improve their learning. Assessment systems are thorough and data is carefully analysed.

The curriculum has a strong emphasis in the development of literacy and numeracy and this has helped to accelerate pupils' progress. It also supports pupils' personal development with equal commitment. Curricular planning has improved so that pupils have access to a range of closely matched learning opportunities that often link learning across subjects. This was evident, for example, in the integration of geography and art within a Year 2 literacy lesson. The Forest School provision significantly enriches pupils' knowledge of nature, science and the wider world. Good provision is made through small group interventions to support pupils with a range of academic and personal needs. This was seen in the daily nurture groups, in the specialist provision in the

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Specialist Resource Base and in the specific group support for able pupils. Good personal, social, health and citizenship education, together with many visits and visitors, strongly promotes pupils' personal development. There is a good range of well-supported extra-curricular clubs to enrich learning.

Staff have a very thorough knowledge of the needs of pupils and their families and support those in difficulties extremely well. The school works very closely with a wide range of support agencies. This effectively supports the health, social or behavioural needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Despite the efforts of the school to improve attendance rates, they remain low.

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 promotes a culture of high expectations and improvement, with a sustained focus on pupils' personal development and academic progress. Staff share her determination to make the school even better. There has been resolute action to ensure that teaching and learning are effective, based on challenging targets for improvement. As a result, a high proportion of the teaching is now good. A rigorous tracking system enables staff to evaluate pupils' progress and teachers are held accountable for the progress made. Teachers benefit from regular feedback about their performance. They now have responsibility for leading and managing subjects across the school. As a result, they work more closely with colleagues to ensure that pupils make more consistent and rapid progress across the school. Effective systems ensure that the school runs smoothly.

Governance has improved significantly as a result of additional training and increased involvement in strategic planning. Governors understand the school's strengths well and now have a good involvement in shaping its future. They actively monitor progress in relation to the development plan and ask increasingly challenging questions about the school's performance. Governors ensure that legal requirements are met, including the rigorous procedures for safeguarding pupils. Roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding are clearly defined. A high priority is given to pupils' safety and well-being. Potential discrimination is tackled resolutely. The school ensures that all pupils have the same opportunities to participate in all the school offers. The school promotes links with the local community effectively and opportunities to learn about other faiths have been developed well. However, there is further work to do to build partnerships with schools

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in different areas of the United Kingdom or abroad. Well-established links with a school in Africa have recently been lost and alternative links are being researched.

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
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are generally very low in relation to the levels expected. A significant number have had limited pre-school experience. Many children have weaknesses in all aspects of communication, particularly in speech and language. Good induction arrangements ensure that children feel safe and settle quickly, are well cared for and build very good relationships with staff. Children behave well, play together confidently and enjoy learning. They achieve well and make good progress across all areas of learning, although their attainment is still below the expected level by the end of Reception, particularly in language and communication. However, personal development is fostered effectively and, as a result, most children reach the expected level in this area of learning. Adults provide effective support and have a good understanding of how young children learn. Occasionally, adults do not intervene sufficiently promptly to ensure that the pace of children's learning is as brisk as it can be. A rich curriculum benefits children's learning, with a well-judged balance between opportunities for children to choose their own activities and adult-led sessions. Recent improvements to the stimulating outdoor area, together with the regular Forest School sessions, ensure that children have good opportunities to extend their learning. Teaching is almost always good. Adults work together very effectively to foster children's well-being and their learning. Systematic teaching ensures, for example, that children have a growing knowledge of sounds and letters, although this has yet to have

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a full impact on their emerging reading and writing skills. There are good systems for observing and assessing children's knowledge and progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Although a relatively small number of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, almost all are very happy with the school. One parent said, 'All the recent changes in the school have been really beneficial - my child loves it!' Parents and carers appreciate the school's responsiveness to the social needs of their children and the good support it provides for their social and academic development. Minor criticisms, raised only by individual parents, related to the challenging behaviour of a few children, to lunchtime supervision and to the extent to which the school informs parents and carers about their child's progress. These were discussed with the school. Inspection evidence indicates that, for most children, behaviour is good and that supervision is generally very effective. School leaders rightly feel that they work hard to sustain communication with parents. Overall, parents and carers feel that this is a caring school where pupils' personal development is strongly supported. Inspection findings strongly endorse these positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southtown Infant 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 164 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	58	13	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	73	8	24	0	0	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	39	15	45	4	12	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	52	16	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	52	16	48	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	33	20	61	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	42	16	48	1	3	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	27	18	55	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	33	20	61	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	30	19	58	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	33	18	55	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	39	17	52	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	61	12	36	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



25 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southtown Infant School, Great Yarmouth, NR31 0HJ

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and watching you at work in your lessons. We found that yours is a good school, which looks after you really well.

Our main findings are these:

- you behave well and work hard in lessons
- you make good progress and most of you are now reaching the standards expected by the end of Year 2
- you feel that teachers make lessons enjoyable and support you well in your learning
- the adults make sure that you are cared for really well
- you feel very safe and have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily
- there are good learning opportunities, you enjoy a good range of visits, and many of you get involved in clubs and extra activities
- the Forest School is a particularly successful feature of the school
- those of you who find learning difficult get a great deal of extra help, so that you generally make good progress
- school leaders work very hard to ensure that you are safe and well looked after.

We are asking the school to make the following changes so that you do even better:

- make sure that you all attend school as often as possible
- ensure that teaching is of an equally high standard in all classes across the school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan

Lead inspector

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