

Southbrook Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121905
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340038
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Joe Peacock

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Burt
Headteacher	Jane Badger
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed nine teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, governors and staff, talked to parents, carers and children, and looked at school planning and assessment data. They examined the school's documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, improvement planning and that relating to safeguarding and children's welfare. They scrutinised 51 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff.

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

- the effectiveness of the curriculum in closing the gap in attainment between boys and girls, especially in reading and writing
- the quality of the interim arrangements to cover staff absence
- how effectively assessment information is being used to accelerate pupils' progress
- how effectively staff, governors and parents work together to improve the school.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is in a Nursery unit, where children attend part-time, and in two Reception classes. There has been a significant amount of staff absence over the past two years and many changes to the governing body where there are still three vacancies to be filled. The headteacher is moving to another post at the end of the term. The junior school headteacher will take over the leadership of the school for a term, pending a new appointment. This is part of the collaboration project between the three schools on the site who are exploring the possibility of future federation or amalgamation. There is no deputy headteacher.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school which is slowly, but steadily, improving. Care for pupils, and the guidance and support provided, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have been maintained at the same effective level since the previous inspection. Staff work well as a team. All have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve and their evaluation of different areas of the school's work is very accurate. The pace of improvement has been slow because of the significant amount of long-term absence involving key members of staff with management responsibilities. This has caused the senior leadership team to be under-staffed for long periods. Consequently, the headteacher has been carrying the burden of improvement with only limited support. Many changes to the governing body mean that new governors need training before they too can play their part in helping to evaluate how well the school is performing. The headteacher has led the school well, ensuring that the trend of improvement has been sustained over the past three years.

New initiatives have been introduced to raise pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy. The particular focus on helping boys to do better is successfully closing the gap in attainment between girls and boys. As a result, overall attainment in mathematics is average by Year 2 but the impact is yet to show in reading and writing, where pupils' attainment is below average. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and most pupils behave well and show a willingness to learn. However, in many lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough. Some teachers are not making full use of the wealth of assessment information to plan tasks which challenge pupils of different ability levels. Furthermore, much of the planned work is mundane and does not excite or interest pupils. In some of the lessons, pupils found work too easy, completed it quickly and then found there was nothing further planned for them. There were some examples of effective teaching and learning but overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory.

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is below average for children's ages but for a small minority it is well below average. Progress is satisfactory for most from their starting points in Nursery and Reception. However, progress is not as rapid as it could be in literacy and numeracy because opportunities for learning are missed when staff do not fully engage children in conversation or set appropriate challenges for them. Leadership and management of this key stage are improving as a team approach is being developed to ensure more consistency between the Nursery and Reception.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards in reading and writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching is more consistently good in order to accelerate the pace of learning
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan stimulating and challenging activities for pupils of all abilities
 - consolidating recently introduced initiatives in reading and writing so that they have a positive impact in driving up standards
 - ensuring teachers improve their questioning technique to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage their communication skills throughout.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by involving more staff and governors in decision making and the evaluation of improvement.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers. They enjoy good relationships with the caring and supportive staff and this gives them the confidence to help one another when they are unsure about their work. In the lessons observed, there was a good atmosphere for learning with pupils often working well together in pairs or small groups. Attainment has improved slightly each year for the past three years but is still just below average in reading and writing. In mathematics, a recent whole-school focus has resulted in rather better progress for pupils and attainment which is average by Year 2. There is very little difference in attainment between girls and boys in this current year due to strategies to involve boys much more in developing their reading and writing skills. However, tasks which are too easy mean that pupils of all abilities are not sufficiently challenged or motivated by their work. As a result, achievement and enjoyment for most is satisfactory. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the strong emphasis on developing personal and social skills. Raising their self-esteem and confidence helps most to be ready to learn. Their progress in mathematics is also better than in reading and writing. Behaviour is good in lessons and around school and most pupils respond well to the extra responsibilities they are given to help in lessons and during assemblies. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to live healthily through their lessons and the school has gained Healthy School status. Pupils say that they feel safe and most have an acute sense of what constitutes a dangerous situation for them. All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good as they were in the last inspection. Pupils demonstrate the necessary skills and personal qualities to live and work together effectively and make school a happy place. They have established strong links with Uganda through the Northampton community and were quick to organise

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events to support the earthquake survivors in Haiti.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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?

Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory. This reflects the satisfactory progress pupils make in lessons. Most pupils comfortably complete what they have been given to do. Teacher expectations are generally not high enough for pupils of all abilities. Where teaching is good, pupils are set interesting tasks and the high quality of teachers' questioning ensures they have to concentrate. Then learning is both challenging and fun and results in good progress in lessons. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is also satisfactory. However, many pupils find it difficult to keep up during over-long lesson introductions.

Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly, giving the school a wealth of information about each individual's progress. However, staff use their own points scoring system which makes national comparisons more difficult. Assessment information is being used to plan the next steps in learning but not consistently enough to plan appropriately challenging work for pupils of different ability levels.

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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The curriculum has breadth but is not having sufficient impact on accelerating pupils' progress in key areas such as reading and writing. Work is in progress to further improve it and ensure that it more effectively provides the interest and challenge to motivate all pupils to learn. Initiatives, such as the home reading programme, are beginning to raise standards. The curriculum is well-adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and these pupils are supported well in lessons. A good range of learning opportunities is provided for such a small school through after-school clubs and visits and visitors; sporting expertise further enriches the curriculum.

The staff know pupils well and effectively provide well-focussed support for all, including the most vulnerable. The kaleidoscope programme has been like a magic wand for some children, raising their self-esteem and improving their relationships and communication. The quality and effectiveness of the support is routinely evaluated and the expertise of specialists from other agencies often sought to ensure pupils' needs are being met. Every effort is being made to encourage good attendance and punctuality and most parents and carers are backing the school, helping to improve the rate of attendance. It is broadly average for a school of this size and type. Transition arrangements are particularly effective. On the second day of the inspection, for example, all pupils moved classes to spend an enjoyable time with their teacher for next year on tasks such as creating self portraits.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Discussions with staff and their responses in the questionnaires clearly demonstrate their enthusiasm and wholehearted commitment to raise standards. Despite the long-term absence of key staff, leadership roles and responsibilities are being effectively developed. All share responsibility to lead and manage teaching and learning in the different subjects.

The governors are well led and organised by an astute and knowledgeable chair. They are providing satisfactory support and challenge by becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school. The headteacher and governors have been accurate in their evaluation of the school's work. All have a clear view of what works well and the priorities for improvement. Some of the issues from the previous inspection are still in focus as improvement programmes have been disrupted

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and progress has been slow as a result.

The school has a good relationship with parents and carers, keeping them informed, regularly seeking their views and involving them in their children's education. Partnerships with other providers and organisations are good, ensuring the needs of all pupils are met. A collaborative partnership has been established with the junior and secondary schools, which share the same site, with a view to providing better continuity for pupils attending each school. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity by monitoring the performance of different groups of pupils and taking action to remove any obstacles to learning or pupils' well-being. However, there is more work to be done to ensure boys do as well as girls and that work is well matched to the needs of different abilities in lessons. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements, are consistently applied across all aspects of the school's work and are regularly and rigorously reviewed. Staff respond promptly to any concerns raised.

The school is a cohesive community and makes a good contribution to community cohesion in the local and wider world communities. The school has evaluated the impact of its actions and has plans to further improve each strand of community cohesion. Staff provide varied experiences for pupils to understand and engage with other cultural groups through lessons about other religions such as Judaism and by celebrating festivals such as Diwali from different religions of the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
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	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children make satisfactory progress relative to their starting points in all

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areas of learning during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. One-third of children transfer from the Nursery to other schools. Children settle quickly and soon make friends. They happily play and work together because of the good quality of care and support provided for them by staff. By the time they transfer to Year 1, attainment is below average in most areas with the exception of children's personal, social and emotional skills which are in line with those expected for children of their age.

Children behave well and demonstrate good levels of independence in their learning both indoors and out. Children's learning and progress are carefully assessed, giving staff an accurate picture on how well they are doing. However, the information is not being used effectively enough to provide sufficient challenge for children, especially in independent activities and for the more-able. There is a satisfactory balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities such as learning letter sounds, using slides, mirrors or creating a tattoo design.

Leadership and management is in the hands of an experienced teacher who ensures that policies, records and procedures for children's safety and welfare are in place. Staff are beginning to share ideas on how to ensure better continuity in the quality of staff support for children's learning in Nursery and Reception. Outdoor learning in Reception is exciting and challenging but play activities in the Nursery outdoor area do not have a strong enough emphasis on learning new skills through effective interactions and challenging questioning by adults. The five children playing in the huge Nursery sand pit, in bare feet, for example, were happy to fill containers and play with toy vehicles and animals in the sand. Opportunities to promote essential skills such as speaking and listening or counting were missed as staff supervised rather than interacted with children to encourage their learning through their play. There are good links with parents and carers and many work alongside their children and are involved in their learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The responses to the inspection questionnaire were very positive. Parents and carers were almost unanimous about how happy they are with their children's experiences at school. For example, 'Can't explain how happy I am. The things they talk about are unbelievable' is a typical comment. Inspectors agree with their positive views after observing the good level of care and attention given to every child and the strong

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partnership with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southbrook Infant and Nursery 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	69	15	29	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	76	11	22	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	75	11	22	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	75	13	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	73	13	25	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	65	15	29	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	53	22	43	2	4	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)	33	65	14	27	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	75	11	22	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	61	15	29	3	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	59	18	35	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	55	20	39	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	78	10	20	1	2	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.



Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Southbrook Infant and Nursery School, Northamptonshire, NN11 4LJ

I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and helpful to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school. It was a pleasure to meet you all.

We could see how much you enjoy coming to school. Most of you worked hard in lessons and your behaviour was so good.

We think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Some aspects, such as the care staff take of you and the support and guidance to help each one of you learn, are good. You told us how safe this makes you feel. We were also impressed with your good knowledge about how to live a healthy lifestyle.

All the staff and governors are keen for you to achieve higher standards. Your teachers are working well together as a team and want you to achieve higher standards, especially in your reading and writing. Some of the ways we think that your teachers can help you to make faster progress are to:

- make sure that they always plan exciting and interesting lessons for you
- make you think by asking you hard questions
- keep up Reading Recovery and Writing through Drama as these are making a difference in how well you are doing.

In the Nursery and Reception classes we are asking staff to check more carefully what you can do and to plan activities which help you to learn new things and make you even better at everything. We would also like other teachers and governors to help the headteacher more to check everything and find anything that can be improved further. We are sure that you will help by working hard and always trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Peacock

Lead inspector

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