

# Southfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	130362
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341034
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Goodchild

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	76
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pat Porter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alix Hazell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 April 2007
<b>School address</b>	Travellers Lane Hatfield Hertfordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons were observed and ten teachers seen. Meetings were held with staff and the Chair of the Governing Body, and informally with pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, the arrangements in place to safeguard pupils, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation, and assessment and tracking data that teachers use to monitor pupils' progress. Fifty-three questionnaire returns from parents and carers were analysed as well as returns from staff.

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

- how the progress of different groups of pupils compares with national expectations for those with similar prior attainment
- the existing strengths in the curriculum and what the school is doing to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils
- how well senior leaders and the governing body are managing and using change as a way of driving improvement.

## Information about the school

This is a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, though an increasing proportion have more complex and diverse needs. Over half the pupils

- have speech and language difficulties, about a third have autistic spectrum disorders and another third have behavioural difficulties. There has been a particular increase in the latter group since the last inspection. A small proportion of pupils have physical or sensory disabilities. There are four times as many boys as girls. Nearly all the pupils are White British and only a few pupils speak English as an additional language. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority. There are just four children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has Artsmark Gold, Activemark and the International Eco Schools awards.

Historically, the school has had a very low turnover of staff. The long-serving headteacher retired in April 2010 and the deputy headteacher took up post as headteacher. At the same time, a new deputy headteacher was appointed. The school faces further staff changes in the near future, with three experienced members of staff retiring at the end of this term. At the time of the inspection, some posts were covered by temporary teachers although new permanent staff will take up post at the beginning of next term.

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

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

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school that is going through a period of transition and has a good capacity to improve. The headteacher has a thorough knowledge of the school, clear vision and high expectations. She is ably supported by staff in key leadership roles and by an exceptionally strong and well-informed governing body. She enjoys the overwhelming confidence of a large majority of parents and carers, who are very appreciative of the care and education provided for their children. The school has been successful in recruiting staff to fill vacancies from the beginning of next term and has an effective programme of staff induction. A restructured senior leadership team is being put in place for September 2010 to strengthen the school's capacity to drive improvement. The school has much good and some outstanding practice, and makes very good use of performance data to set challenging individual targets, check pupils' progress and to inform school improvement. Self-evaluation is good overall. Senior leaders and members of the governing body review the school's progress towards targets in its improvement plan on a monthly basis. However, the system for evaluating school effectiveness does not ensure that all staff are aware of what needs to be improved to move aspects of the school's work from good to outstanding, and the monitoring of teaching is not as rigorous as it should be.

Pupils achieve well and the progress of those pupils who are about to leave school has been outstanding. Pupils are currently making good progress in their learning because teaching is good, ranging from satisfactory to outstanding. Where teaching is satisfactory and where otherwise good lessons have some shortcomings, this stems partly from lesson planning and activities that are not matched closely enough to the prior attainment of individual pupils. The difficulties some staff are experiencing in managing more pronounced behavioural difficulties than they have previously encountered are also contributory factors. Staff have received training in safe handling and the use of restraint and this has resulted in a steady reduction in the number, intensity and duration of incidents of challenging behaviour. Training is planned for those who are not skilled in the use of de-escalation techniques to further reduce behavioural incidents.

The school makes exceptionally good use of its partnership with other agencies and has some highly effective systems for engaging parents. Outstanding provision for care, guidance and support contributes to pupils' exceptionally good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their good personal development. Pupils are happy and have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. They relate well with one another and demonstrate increasing confidence as they move through the school. They develop good working habits and enjoy learning. This helps to ensure that they are well

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prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

- Improve teaching and learning by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently match learning objectives and tasks to the needs of individual pupils
  - increasing staff skills in managing pupils with challenging behaviour.
- Strengthen the drive for school improvement by:
  - rigorously monitoring lessons and teachers' planning
  - sharpening self-evaluation so that all staff are clear about exactly what needs to be improved and their role within this.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Performance data shows that pupils in Year 6 who are about to leave the school, and those who have left in recent years, have achieved exceptionally well. Staff changes and an increase in the number of pupils with complex needs mean that progress now varies from outstanding to satisfactory. The school promotes pupils' literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, and personal, social and health education well. As pupils move through the school, they develop confidence in expressing themselves in writing and most are able to read simple texts fluently. For instance, in a literacy lesson in Years 5 and 6 pupils produced extended pieces of writing, making good use of vocabulary lists to support their spelling, and confidently reading what they had written to the rest of the class. Most groups make similar progress, including those with speech and language difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, girls and boys, looked after children, those of minority ethnic heritage and pupils who speak English as an additional language. In some lessons, pupils with challenging behaviour make less progress than their classmates because time is taken up in containing their behaviour rather than moving them on in their learning. Occasionally, some pupils make only satisfactory progress when work is not matched closely enough to their prior attainment or learning needs.

Pupils greatly enjoy school and this is evident in their enthusiasm for learning, their good levels of participation in out-of-school activities and their outstanding attendance. Despite inappropriate behaviour by a small minority of pupils, behaviour is good overall and most pupils behave exceptionally well, applying themselves diligently to the tasks they are given. Pupils say they feel safe and can go to any adult in school if they are worried or upset by anything. Pupils stay healthy through vigorous exercise, as seen in the playground at lunchtime, through a variety of planned sporting activities such as rugby, cricket and dance, and through making healthy choices from the well-balanced school meals. Most, but not all, pupils who bring packed lunches also make healthy choices and the school is working with parents to provide additional guidance. Pupils make a good contribution to the community as 'buddies', as members of the active

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school council, in raising funds for world charities, and as members of the eco committee where they take part in conservation activities. Pupils make rapid progress in developing confidence and self-esteem and their spiritual development is greatly enhanced by some excellent opportunities to experience awe and wonder, as seen in an outstanding circle time.

*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>	*
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>2</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>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Throughout the school, teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' thinking and they make good use of their teaching assistants to support learning. Where teaching is outstanding, lessons are carefully planned, expectations are high, staff and pupils enjoy excellent relationships and behaviour is managed skilfully. Where there are shortcomings in teaching, activities are not matched closely enough to the needs of individuals so that pupils complete the same tasks regardless of their prior attainment,

<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.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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the only difference being the outcome and the amount of support they receive. There is sometimes too much reliance on worksheets in these lessons. Where teaching is good in most respects, learning objectives are not always clear enough, concentrating on what pupils are to do rather than what they are meant to learn. Some lessons end with a very thorough summing up of what pupils have achieved but this is inconsistent. Throughout the school, pupils have exceptionally precise individual targets and marking often informs them of how to improve their work. Homework is used well to extend learning, especially for older pupils.

The curriculum is adapted well to the wide range of individual needs. For example, objects of reference, visual aids, signing and special techniques such as the picture exchange communication system (PECS) are used to ensure that pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are included in activities and have equal access to learning. Social stories are used for pupils with poorly developed social skills, and signing and headphones are used for those with hearing impairment. The needs of the few gifted and talented pupils are catered for mainly through setting and sometimes by extending their learning in lessons. Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide range of visits to places of interest, such as the zoo, the woods, temples and churches, art galleries and museums as well as by participation in dance festivals. A variety of visitors to the school, including representatives from the Saracens rugby club, enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment. There is a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills for all groups of pupils and some examples of learning being made exciting through open-ended topics. This was evident during the inspection from displays of recent artwork, research on family trees and learning taking place as part of an 'activity week' in the infant department. Stimulating practical activities are less well established than they might be on a day-to-day basis and the school is in the process of reviewing the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 to make sure it is matched fully to the needs of all groups of pupils.

Support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable is detailed and thorough. Staff work very effectively with a range of different agencies to assess, plan and implement highly individualised programmes. For example, the few pupils who are looked after by the local authority have a planned programme of support involving speech and language therapy, work with the behaviour support team, the child and mental health service, and social services. The school is liaising very closely with parents of those pupils with challenging behaviour, as well as working extremely closely with other agencies. Outstanding arrangements are in place to ensure a very smooth transition when pupils leave school through a highly individualised programme of support for pupils and their families.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

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<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>
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## How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher and the governing body are managing staff changes well and using this period of transition to reshape their vision for the school. Governors provide exceptionally strong support to senior leaders and are very closely involved in the school's strategic development. The school has been successful in recruiting permanent staff for September 2010 to replace those who are retiring and to remedy the current situation where some posts are covered by temporary teachers. The restructuring of the leadership team includes clear allocation of responsibilities for driving improvement in all aspects of the school's work. Senior leaders analyse performance data thoroughly to identify strengths and areas for development within teaching and the curriculum. The increased involvement of teachers in this process means that they are well aware of how much progress pupils in their classes are making. However, lesson observation and the monitoring of teachers' work is not as rigorous as it should be, for instance, in checking to ensure that all teachers plan lessons thoroughly.

Systems for vetting staff and visitors are exemplary. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures and any concerns are rigorously monitored. Despite exceptionally good use of assessment information to set targets and some outstanding teaching, variation in the way activities are matched to the needs of different pupils means that the promotion of equal opportunities is good overall. The school works very closely with the local community and has some valuable international links; it is working to extend these and to establish connections in the United Kingdom. There is a very active friends' association and the school has a highly positive relationship with almost all its parents and carers. They are kept very well informed and have some exceptionally good opportunities to develop their skills, for instance by attending parenting courses and through the support of the parent worker.

*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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</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>



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<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 school makes good provision for children in the Reception year. As in the rest of the school, teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall. Children have good opportunities to make choices as well as taking part in activities led by adults. Children become absorbed in activities and staff support their learning very well, asking questions and using a range of techniques to develop their communication skills. In the best sessions, teachers are highly skilled in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development and instilling enjoyment in learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, learning is at times too formal for children of this age and some staff have difficulty in coping with those with the most challenging behaviour. Curriculum planning is very thorough and good enrichment, such as activity week, extends children's learning. Assessment is good. Children are thoroughly assessed when they join the school to identify their learning needs and have very specific learning targets. Staff record detailed observations and use assessment information well in planning individual sessions to meet children's needs. There are good procedures for involving parents in assessment and for encouraging them to support learning at home. Children are exceptionally well cared for and have trusting relationships with the staff. Provision is led and managed well, and teamwork amongst the staff is strong.

*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

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are happy with the experience the school provides for their children and most consider that they are making good progress. Inspection findings support parents' and carers' positive views. A very few parents wrote to inspectors expressing concern about the way behavioural incidents are managed but nearly all parents believe that the school keeps their children safe. Behaviour is good overall but the school is in the process of adjusting to the increasing number of pupils with challenging behaviour. It has, rightly, identified the need for further staff training but is working very closely with other agencies to

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minimise behavioural incidents.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southfield 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 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	72	12	23	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	66	15	28	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	66	18	34	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	60	16	30	3	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	32	60	19	36	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	60	18	34	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	58	20	38	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	62	14	26	4	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	64	11	21	5	9	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	64	15	28	0	0	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	57	19	36	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	33	62	15	28	1	2	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	75	9	17	3	6	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](http://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"><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.**



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southfield School, Hatfield, AL10 8TJ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. Southfield is going through a lot of changes at the moment, and it will take time for you to get used to having a new headteacher, a new deputy headteacher and other staff who are coming to work at the school in September. We found that you go to a good school which does some things really well.

We were pleased to see that you enjoy school and try hard with your work. You are making good progress and those of you who are about to leave have done extremely well. I was impressed to see how much writing you do and how confidently you are able to read aloud to the rest of the class. You have also done some lovely work in art: I particularly enjoyed looking at your big paintings in the style of Aboriginal artists and your experiments in painting like Van Gogh. The school cares for you really well and works very closely with people like speech therapists and other specialists to help with your learning. You told us that you are happy and proud of your school. You do some good work to look after the planet, helping with conservation and recycling, and raise funds for a lot of charities. You get on well together and the school helps you to feel good about yourselves.

Most of you behave extremely well and behaviour is good, although the school has more pupils now who find it difficult to behave well. Next term, your teachers and teaching assistants will be doing some more training to find out extra ways of getting everyone to behave. The headteacher, staff and governors check carefully to see how well you have done and make sure that you all have very detailed targets in your individual education plans. We have asked them to think about what the school already does really well and what could be improved, and to make sure you all have work that is just right for you, not too easy and not too difficult. You can help too by trying hard and all behaving as well as possible.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Goodchild

Lead inspector

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