

Sinclair Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133943
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	354222
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Dickinson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Gerida Montague-Munson
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an additional inspector. Ten lessons were observed taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the interim executive board and pupils. A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at relevant documentation, including data on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance, evidence of the school's monitoring and curriculum plans for several subjects. Inspectors considered the responses to the parents' questionnaires issued recently by the school. They also analysed questionnaires completed during the inspection, by pupils in Key Stage 2 and by 21 members of staff.

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

- The extent to which leaders and managers at all levels have the capacity to sustain improvement and to improve further the school's effectiveness.
- Pupils' assessments from the end of the summer term and the school's analyses of the progress all pupils made last year in writing and mathematics.
- The effectiveness and success of the school's curriculum plans in promoting pupils' learning, progress and personal development.

Information about the school

The school is an average-sized primary school. Since the school's last inspection, it has been led by a partnership headteacher who is also the headteacher of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, approximately a mile away. There have been several staff changes over the last year. Two teachers transferred from Holy Family at the beginning of September. Almost all teachers are now on permanent contracts and the partnership headteacher's contract has been extended. Soon after the last inspection the local authority replaced the governing body with an interim executive board. The local authority is currently working with the interim executive board to consider the longer-term options for the school.

Most pupils are of White British heritage, although the number of pupils coming from homes where English is not the first language is steadily rising. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has reduced to broadly average. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and a Reception class.

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

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The school has seen substantial and rapid improvement in just over a year with its overall effectiveness changing from inadequate to good. Central to this has been the partnership headteacher's relentless drive and determination in tackling the key weaknesses identified at the last inspection. She has instilled a sense of ambition and has strived for high standards. These are shared by staff and recognised by many pupils; words such as 'unrecognisable', 'dramatic' and 'amazing' were used by both groups to capture the school's improvement over the last year. The interim executive board has also provided strong challenge and support for the school and, together with the partnership headteacher, has been instrumental in guiding the school's work and sustaining its improvement.

The senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's work. The quality and range of their monitoring has become increasingly effective over the last year because it has been sharply focused on individual pupil's learning. Coupled with the increasingly effective and targeted teaching, this has helped more pupils to catch up quickly and close the gaps in their learning. All groups of pupils made good progress last year and this continues to be the case. Pupils' good progress has led to rising attainment and the proportion of pupils working at the expected levels is increasing in all year groups. Standards in Year 6 in the 2010 national tests, for example, rose sharply and they are now more typical of the standards normally found. This is a landmark in the school's recent history. There is no doubt that the school's sustained focus on improving standards in writing, mathematics and science has been successful. One area where there is still ground to make up is pupils' writing in Years 5 and 6. Although they are making good progress, these pupils still have some gaps in their skills and ability as writers, which stem from their past underachievement.

Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection to good overall and there is some exemplary practice that leads to highly effective learning. In these cases teachers plan a mixture of tasks that are skilfully tailored to individuals or small groups. The teaching is often creative and fluid, as teachers adapt their approaches, refocus pupils or move them on quickly to the next stage when they are ready. This goes hand in hand with the pupils' increasing involvement in their own learning, through checking their own or a partners' work, for example, referring to their personal writing targets or responding to the teachers' marking. Teachers with leadership responsibilities have benefited from support and coaching through the partnership with Holy Family, in developing their leadership roles. They are taking increasing responsibility for leading

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developments and for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. However, this is mostly at an early stage and the school has rightly identified this as an ongoing area for development.

The school's revised curriculum plans, together with the strong and necessary focus on basic skills over the last year, has meant that some wider aspects of pupils' personal development have had less attention. Pupils have limited opportunities to take responsibility, show initiative and to contribute to and influence school life ' the broader skills needed to equip them well in the future. Aspects of their cultural development, including their awareness of cultural diversity, are also less developed.

The effective support from the partnership school was a frequent feature during the school's first term of being in special measures. This has been gradually reduced as the school has developed its own capacity and become self-reliant. The significant improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' learning and progress demonstrate that the school now has good capacity. The school's leaders and staff are well placed to continue to develop the school's work in their quest for excellence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Focus on the pupils who have the most ground to make up in writing, particularly those in Years 5 and 6, so that they continue to make good progress and reach at least average standards in writing by the time they leave the school.
- Continue to develop and embed the revised curriculum to promote pupils' wider personal development, including the skills and qualities pupils need for their future lives, and their knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity.
- Strengthen the role of middle leaders so that they have a demonstrable and direct impact on pupils' learning, progress and overall achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' enjoyment of their learning has increased substantially since the last inspection. They show a keenness to work hard in lessons and show pride in their achievements, particularly when they have accomplished a task or met a specific target. They work purposefully on their own, in pairs and in small groups, often engaging in informal, spontaneous conversations to share their progress and ideas, or to help one another. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and they make good use of the resources available to support them. There is an industrious atmosphere in lessons and the pupils' positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to this.

The school's data show that all groups made good progress last year, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is also reflected in pupils' books and in the work seen in lessons. Some pupils, including many of those who left Year 6 last year, made outstanding progress during the last 12 months. As a result, performance in English, mathematics and science has risen dramatically in the last year from significantly below average to standards that are more typical for Year 6. There was a marked rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and

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mathematics in the 2010 tests. This is testament to the good level of challenge in lessons and to the pupils' commitment to their own learning.

Pupils' have a good understanding of a range of health issues, which enables them to make healthy choices. They respond positively to health initiatives such as walking or cycling to school. Pupils value and take up the opportunity to be active in a range of after-school clubs, for example cheerleading and karate. The pupils' behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. They are particularly enthusiastic about the arrangements for playtimes, with the zone boxes and range of games. Many pupils added comments to their questionnaires expressing their enjoyment of this initiative. Pupils show good awareness of safety and appreciate the recent improvements to the school site. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced substantially. Attendance is improving steadily, but remains below the national average. This is despite the school's unstinting efforts to emphasise the importance of good attendance to parents and carers, to the point of issuing a small number of fines and penalty notices when necessary.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

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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Much of the teaching is characterised by energy, pace and enthusiasm. Teachers have high expectations and they plan demanding tasks which build well on pupils' previous learning. Teaching assistants are used well. This feature of the school's work has improved and become increasingly consistent in the last year. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and some of the teachers' feedback for pupils, both during lessons and in books, is of high quality. Pupils are given opportunities to decide for themselves how successful they have been in their learning. A striking example of this occurred when pupils in Year 4 used statements that were given to them at the start of the lesson to evaluate their writing at the end, and to give thoughtful feedback to each other.

The school has recently implemented a broad and interesting curriculum which develops specific skills and links subjects. This has been a factor in pupils' improved enjoyment and achievement. Learning experiences are well matched to the needs of all pupils because of the strong framework that is now in place. Pupils speak enthusiastically of how information and communication technology is used to support their learning. However, the curriculum has not had sufficient time to address the gaps in some pupils' learning, particularly for those higher up the school, or to provide equally well for all aspects of their personal development. The school has ensured a good focus on developing the more technical aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Alongside this, teachers are developing some engaging activities to give pupils reasons to talk about and apply their writing skills. For example, pupils in Year 1 questioned adults enthusiastically, who they met around the school, and took notes while on an enjoyable hunt for a missing gingerbread man. The school recognises that these creative and stimulating opportunities to inspire pupils to talk about experiences prior to writing are not yet routinely and fully embedded across the school.

The school is a caring and supportive place in which to work and learn. Staff ensure that pupils feel safe in school and they respond sensitively when any pupils encounter problems, feel upset or have concerns. Support plans for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are carefully thought through and the school works effectively with outside agencies when appropriate.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The partnership headteacher has steered the school skilfully through a challenging

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period. Her leadership has been incisive in its focus and very effective. During this time the deputy headteacher's role and responsibilities have developed considerably. The improvements in the way the school uses data and information from pupils' assessments are good examples of the deputy headteacher's work. Every pupil's progress is reviewed frequently, to highlight any who need specific support, and this, together with the well-targeted teaching, has been instrumental in accelerating pupils' progress. This sharp focus on each pupil's achievement demonstrates the school's good commitment to equal opportunities. This has enabled the school to make significant strides in ensuring that no pupils are disadvantaged through underachievement. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Over the last year all efforts have rightly focused on addressing the significant weaknesses related to pupils' achievement. As a result there has been less attention to developing their knowledge of the religious and ethnic mix in the immediate, neighbouring and more distant communities within the United Kingdom. The school's development plan has provided a clear steer for the school's improvement. The partnership headteacher, in conjunction with the local authority, has reviewed this regularly, to check the school's progress and make any necessary amendments. The members of the interim executive board have a wealth of experience across education and governance. The minutes show that meetings have been sharply focused on the required areas for improvement, including close and detailed scrutiny of the data on pupils' performance and progress. As a result, the interim executive board has played a key role in the school's improvement over the last year.

Arrangements to protect pupils and keep them safe are good and well understood by staff. The partnership headteacher ensures that staff training in child protection is regularly updated and that new members of staff are conversant with the school's procedures.

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	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Nursery provides a safe and nurturing environment for children to play and explore. The children settle well, helped by the outstanding care they receive. The Nursery's outside area has been substantially developed and extended over the last year and this resource is used very effectively throughout the day, in sunshine and in rain. Children are given every opportunity to make choices, experiment and to develop their confidence and independence. They make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This prepares them well for transition to the Reception class. The Nursery leader has a very clear vision for Nursery education and has had a significant impact upon the Nursery provision. Staff have a detailed knowledge of individual children and the small steps in their learning and development are celebrated, noted and built upon. The very detailed and helpful end-of-year reports are much appreciated by parents. The children grow and flourish in this setting, which gives them an outstanding start to their early education and experience of school life.

Children settle well in the Reception class. The new teacher is establishing the classroom routines and, at this early stage in the year, most children are already responding well to these. The lessons are well planned to cover the areas of learning for children of this age. Praise is used well to encourage the children and mark their achievements. Teachers and teaching assistants grasp every opportunity to promote children's personal and social development and any minor incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and sensitively. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to focus the teaching on the specific learning intention of the activity. There is a well-organised, revised system in place for recording ongoing observations of children's learning and development, to note achievements and to influence future planning. There is careful attention to their safety and well-being. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led effectively. Provision has improved since the last inspection. The good overall quality of provision helps children to build successfully upon their well below-average starting points when they first start in the Nursery. They make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception year children's attainment is below the standards expected. Nevertheless, this is increasing in some areas, such as children's recognition of letters and the sounds they make and their early reading skills. Arrangements at transition points, between Nursery and Reception and then into Year 1, are well managed.

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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

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. However, inspectors considered the school's analysis of the questionnaire it issued to parents in June 2010. This showed a high degree of satisfaction relating to several key areas: their child's enjoyment of school; the way the school works with parents to support their child's learning; the steps taken to ensure children are kept safe and well prepared for their future; the quality of teaching; and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Several parents requested improvements were made to the fencing around the school and the school has addressed this during the summer.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



8 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sinclair Primary and Nursery School, Southampton SO16 8GF

Thank you for giving us a warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to many of you and we would like to thank all of you who spoke to us. We were also pleased that the pupils in Years 3 to 6 agreed to fill in a questionnaire. We read every one. I would especially like to thank the members of the school council, who met me and answered lots of questions very well.

I am writing to let you know what we found out about your school. When we inspected the school in June 2009, there were some important things that needed improving quickly. The school has done this very well. The partnership your school has with Holy Family, especially the headteacher, has helped your school to improve rapidly. You are now making much better progress than in the past because you are taught well. Some lessons are very good indeed and you learn very effectively in these. We were pleased to hear that you are enjoying lessons and school life and that you feel safe and happy in school. Your work in writing, mathematics and science is much better, but some of the pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 need to continue to make good progress this year in their writing. We have asked the school to make sure these pupils do as well as they can. We have also asked the teachers who have special responsibilities to keep an eye on how all of you are progressing so that they can identify things that need improving and help to make your school even better.

We have asked the school to plan more opportunities for you to develop the sort of skills that you need for your next school and the future. For example chances to take responsibility, make decisions, solve problems and contribute to school life. We have also asked the teachers to help you learn more about people who live in your area and further afield, including abroad, so that you can learn more about different cultures, traditions and religions. We judged your behaviour to be good and we found that you are keen to work hard in lessons. We trust that you will continue to do this so that you all benefit as much as you can from your time at Sinclair.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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