

Southwick Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108769
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309795
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Adshead
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Stoker
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Clarence Street Southwick Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 2HD
Telephone number	0191 5535500
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school is set in one of the most deprived areas in the country. It merged with two other schools in 2005, increasing numbers significantly. New premises are under construction. Extended services are provided. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well above average; so too is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has gold Healthy Schools and Activemark awards; the British Council International Schools award and the Basic Skills Agency's Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Southwick Primary is a good school where pupils flourish because of the good attention given to their care and well-being. This is reflected in the staff's great sensitivity to all of the pupils' needs. Standards fluctuate through the school, reflecting the differing abilities of the year groups. However, all pupils make good progress in relation to their very low starting points. This is because provision for those pupils with special educational needs and others with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Teachers in the Foundation Stage settle the children into the school routine and help them develop positive attitudes to learning, so that they enjoy their learning and make good progress. Family literacy and numeracy sessions enable parents to learn alongside their children. These are a strong feature of the partnership that exists between the school, parents and the local community. One parent wrote, 'This is a lovely, happy school.'

Teaching and learning are effective and lead to good achievement. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are responding well to the significant change to the way classes are taught, triggered by stringent remedial action introduced by the leadership team following a recent dip in standards. However, teaching sometimes lacks sufficiently high expectations and does not consistently provide enough challenge for pupils to practise and apply their emerging skills. This particularly affects pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy. Progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 and it is here that the pace and challenge of teaching is frequently most demanding. Although standards at the end of Key Stage 2 remain below average in English and mathematics, there is evidence of improvement over the last six months. ICT skills are particularly well developed at all ages, preparing pupils well for their future lives. The school has recently taken action to improve achievement in science, though the full impact of this is not yet evident in all classes. Teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting the pupils with learning difficulties so they make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. One pupil commented, 'This is a good, friendly school.' It is clear they enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. Teachers enhance the old buildings with bright displays that feature much of the pupils' work and show the impact of the excellent cultural provision. Pupils say they especially enjoy the many activities, visits and clubs that are an excellent feature of the rich curriculum. The emphasis on providing a supportive environment has improved attendance, though this is still below average. Most pupils respect one another. They have a good understanding of living a healthy lifestyle and take plenty of exercise. They make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council. They are growing in confidence and developing greater independence so that they are well prepared for the move to secondary school.

The headteacher, her deputy and the governing body provide strong leadership. Management responsibilities are now shared across the staff team so monitoring of progress has improved. The use of assessment for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because it provides up to date information to assist planning for the many pupils in this group. Good work has been started on systems to assess and track the progress of all pupils in a similar manner, but these are less well established and information is not yet used effectively to plan lessons and to advise pupils how to improve their work. Self-evaluation is accurate and the senior leadership team tackle identified weaknesses swiftly and effectively. As a result, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Taking into account the impact of the teamwork evident in the school, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good as a result of good leadership and management. Teaching assistants are especially well deployed, and teachers' planning and assessment effectively monitored. There is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment among the adults. The focus on care and support assists children to settle happily into the school routine, feeling safe and secure as they begin to develop their personal and social qualities. As their confidence develops, they select from activities that interest and challenge them, including ICT. The quality of teaching and learning is good and features a brisk pace and a variety of activities that promote enjoyment and progress. As a result, children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Children enter the Nursery with skills exceptionally below those that are typical for their age. They make good progress and achieve well although they enter Year 1 with standards well below those that are typical for their age. Parents enjoy a strong partnership with the school and speak highly of how well their children are cared for and develop.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce more rigour and challenge to learning, focused on raising standards in literacy and numeracy in Years 1 and 2.
- Build on the work already underway to raise standards in science.
- Make more effective use of assessment when planning lessons and informing pupils how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and make good progress although standards are below average. In Years 2 and 6, standards are variable because of the differing abilities of the groups. Some years include large numbers of pupils with lower ability including those with statements of special educational need. In 2007 standards dipped sharply at the end of Year 2 because the abilities of the group were less strong than in previous years. Effective action taken over the last six months has improved matters and pupils in Year 2 are now making satisfactory progress from their variable starting points although standards remain low. Test results at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were well below average in English and mathematics, and exceptionally below average in science. Inspection evidence shows that action taken to improve assessment and teaching has been effective and has had a very positive impact. Standards are rising and although they are below average this represents good progress for the majority of pupils. Science still lags behind other subjects and the school is now giving more attention to this. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are assessed accurately and they are offered prompt and effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Pupils enjoy school. 'It's good for learning', said one. They feel valued and say that they are influential. The school council, for example, have met with governors to discuss improvements in school lunches. 'We're proud to be on the school council,' they said. 'We are responsible and care for others.' The effort the school makes to improve behaviour is rewarded by pupils who are polite and considerate, but

attendance remains below the national average. Pupils feel secure at school and know how to stay safe. They are clear about the procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and bullying. They talk knowledgeably about the need for exercise and healthy eating and the related awards won by the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The strong ethos of care results in pupils' increasing self-esteem and confidence. Cultural awareness is outstanding. Pupils talked about the links they enjoy with school children in Malta and their knowledge about the many cultural displays around the school. They believe that they are lucky to be in a school where so many cultures are explained to them because, in an almost totally White British environment, they say, 'It helps us to understand others' beliefs.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teaching assistants are used very well. Staff work successfully together to support pupils' diverse emotional needs. Teachers know their pupils well and have good relationships with them. Pupils respond very positively and enjoy lessons. 'Teachers are kind. They help you when you're stuck,' said one. In some classes, pupils evaluate their own work and the work of others. Academic targets, where set, vary in their precision so offer mixed value. Often, teachers' marking of work indicates how individuals can improve. The best teaching leads, unsurprisingly, to the best progress and occurs in the Year 3 to 6 classes. Good pace, interesting, varied tasks and careful checking of learning all feature. Elsewhere, in a minority of lessons, pupils spend too long as a class group sitting on the carpet. This not only limits the progress they make on their individual tasks but results in loss of concentration and attention. Teachers have good levels of expertise but occasionally they fail to identify pupils' errors or readiness to learn and, in these lessons, rigour and challenge is missing. Sometimes questions make pupils think and consider alternatives but in some lessons questions have insufficient expectation or challenge to help pupils progress. Work for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well thought out and appropriate throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, meeting statutory requirements and the needs of all groups of pupils. Strengths are reflected in the awards that the school has gained. Provision for those with special educational needs and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is strong, being based on well-recorded strategies. Curricular planning for teaching in ability groups assists all to make progress. The links and partnerships with outside agencies are excellent and make a significant contribution to broadening pupils' experiences and understanding. A good example of this is the production of a series of community-based radio programmes requiring pupils to use writing skills and hold interviews with local people. Such projects effectively prepare pupils for life beyond school. Visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and assist pupils' personal development, especially developing their confidence. The current major curricular overhaul provides an excellent overview of provision but is too recent to have impacted on pupils' progress or standards. Provision for ICT across the school is particularly good and helps prepare pupils for their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive a high standard of care and support and academic guidance is developing. All pupils questioned felt supported by staff and their peers and knew that there was someone to turn to if they need help or advice. Effective arrangements help to ensure the health and safety of pupils and the school works very well indeed with outside agencies and parents. Statutory requirements for child protection are in place and staff understand the procedures. The emphasis on providing exemplary nurturing care is very successful and the school has developed an excellent partnership with other agencies. The many prevention strategies to ensure behaviour maintains its good standard work well and have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Well organised systems for tracking pupils' progress and providing guidance, both academic and emotional, are in place but the academic tracking systems are not yet sufficiently linked together to ensure a quick enough response to every individual need. Checks on progress are not collated frequently enough to provide timely management overviews and some targets are not precise; though action regarding the large numbers who have learning difficulties and/or difficulties is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led well by a purposeful and astute headteacher who has acted swiftly to address falling standards by setting out clear and appropriate direction for improvement whilst maintaining the emphasis on nurturing care. She and her deputy have led the school well through turbulent times, including demanding planning for the move to new premises. Governors support the school well. Together, since the last inspection, school leaders have successfully eliminated a significant budget deficit that stemmed from the merger with other schools. A recent initiative to link governors with teachers in curriculum groups for joint training improves the support and challenge they provide.

The school's written self-evaluation was accurate. Middle managers ably support the strong ethos of teamwork that helps them play a key role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This too is improving standards. The recently introduced assessment systems are giving a more precise picture of how well pupils are doing but the setting and use of challenging individual academic targets is not as clear or frequent as it could be. However, management of all groups of pupils is good and progress is carefully recorded through the various strategies now in place. The leadership team take every opportunity to involve parents and carers in their children's education and the school has developed very strong partnerships with outside agencies and the community. Teaching assistants are particularly well deployed to support the many pupils with learning needs. It is not surprising that parents voice their support of the school and its management.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southwick Primary School, Sunderland, SR5 2HD

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. It was a pleasure to hear how much you like your teachers and enjoy school. We think your school is providing you with a good education and there are signs that it is improving all the time.

There is such a lot that is good about your school. The staff work hard to make sure you are given lots of interesting things to do so that school really is fun and you enjoy learning. Your teachers take good care of you and it was pleasing to hear that you feel safe and secure in school. We were delighted by your good behaviour. It was also pleasing to hear how much you enjoy the many clubs and activities that are made available to you. You all have a good understanding of the need to eat a healthy diet and to exercise regularly, and are clearly very proud of the lovely displays you have made to show which foods are good for you.

Your teachers are keen to make sure that you all achieve well and they are working hard to ensure that you do. There are some things that the school needs to do better, especially in helping those of you in Years 1 and 2 do as well as you can in literacy and numeracy. We have asked the school to make better use of what teachers know about how well you are doing to set work and make sure you all know what to do next to improve. We have also asked the school to work more on improving your science skills.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. You are lucky to go to such a warm and friendly school.

With best wishes

Ruth McFarlane

Lead inspector