

# South Petherton Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	314690
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Melvyn Hemmings

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	101
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Slocombe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catherine Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Hayes End South Petherton TA13 5AG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01460 240172
<b>Fax number</b>	01460 242501

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of pupils in writing, especially the more able; the consistency of progress through the school; to what extent pupils are involved in assessing for themselves how well they are doing; the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT), art, music and drama; how effectively leadership and management are maintaining the high performance of previous years. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, assessment and tracking records, observations of the school at work, discussions with staff, the chair of governors, the school improvement adviser and pupils. The parental questionnaire responses were analysed. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This is a small rural school with four single-age classes. The attainment of most pupils on entry to Year 3 is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007 after almost a year of acting headship in the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides pupils with a wide range of exciting and challenging activities within a very caring ethos that cherishes each of them as individuals. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are very pleased with the experiences provided for their children. One parental comment is typical of many: 'My child has never come home complaining of being bored. He is stretched in imaginative ways and thoroughly enjoys his time at school.'

Pupils achieve well and, in recent years, have attained above average standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Good quality teaching and learning are a major factor in the pupils' success. Teachers plan their lessons well to build on previous work so pupils can use what they already know to support their current learning. Activities are stimulating and so maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Teaching assistants provide good support for all pupils, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good opportunities provided for pupils to talk in pairs to discuss and develop their ideas. This makes a positive contribution to their good skills in speaking and listening. Progress is good overall, although it is uneven between classes. As a result, pupils in some classes make better progress than in others. This stems from teachers not always using information about individual pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to set work that sufficiently challenges their different abilities. Pupils show very good attitudes to their work and are keen to learn and improve their performance. They say that they particularly like practical activities. This is reflected in their very strong performance in science, in which they are provided with many opportunities to carry out practical scientific investigations.

The headteacher provides resolute leadership and clear direction for the school. All staff share her vision for school improvement, and a strong sense of teamwork is evident. Leadership and management identified that the performance of more able pupils in writing in the Year 6 national tests in 2007 was not as good as in previous years. It was acknowledged that these pupils had not been sufficiently stretched to achieve to their full capability. Action was taken quickly to bring about improvement. This included providing pupils with more focused targets in writing so they are now more aware of the criteria they need to meet to achieve the higher level in this aspect of English. Such action is already proving successful and the school's data shows more pupils on track to attain the higher level in writing in 2008.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and has enabled it to correctly identify the priority areas for development. These include providing sufficient challenge for more able pupils in writing and making progress consistent through the school. It is evident, however, that much of the responsibility for bringing about improvement is centred on the headteacher. She has a very heavy workload, including teaching for two days each week. The school acknowledges the need to lighten this workload and more effectively involve some staff in school improvement by delegating specific leadership and management responsibilities. Governors are supportive of the school and make a good contribution to helping it move forward.

Pupils behave in an exemplary way and are extremely kind and considerate to others. They show much enjoyment in coming to school, which is reflected in the above average attendance rate. There is a very friendly atmosphere throughout the school and relationships are excellent. As one pupil typically said, 'This is a happy and friendly school in which we feel safe'. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. They

talk enthusiastically about the healthy options they can choose at lunchtime. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community by taking on a range of responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. They also contribute very well to the wider village community, such as by taking part in the local carnival and in country dancing in the village square. They are well prepared for their future lives.

A particular strength of the school is the excellent variety of enrichment activities that extend the good curriculum. The school buys in outside specialists to enhance provision in art, music, drama and physical education. As a result, pupils achieve high standards in these subjects. This is reflected in the stunning displays of pupils' artwork in classrooms and corridors and the fact that every pupil in Years 3 and 4 plays a musical instrument. The school provides a range of artists and performers to work with pupils, including theatre groups and a local charcoal artist. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a variety of out of school clubs, such as art, samba drumming and 'Le Club Francais'. Visits to places of educational interest further extend pupils' experiences, and they particularly like the residential visit they have in Years 5 and 6. Curriculum planning does not always meet individual pupils' needs and leads to inconsistencies in progress between classes. Provision in ICT is good, with pupils having access to laptops throughout the day to develop their skills in the subject and support learning in other subjects. This was seen to good effect in a literacy lesson for pupils in Year 5. They confidently used their ICT skills to develop new scenes and characters into their stories.

There is an outstanding level of pastoral care for all pupils. Everyone in the school is firmly committed to ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are very thorough. All staff have undertaken child protection training and know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. Risk assessments are firmly in place for activities, both in and around the school and during visits. Senior teaching assistants play an important pastoral role by leading weekly meetings with other assistants to discuss individual pupils and their needs. Of particular note is the 'X zone' project for pupils needing extra nurturing. This enables pupils to spend time in a specially designed sensory area to relax and talk over with a member of staff any worries or concerns they might have. It is also used as a means of pupils sharing and celebrating their achievements with others.

There are very strong links with outside agencies to provide extra support for individual pupils when needed. The school also works very closely with the infant and secondary schools to provide a comprehensive transfer programme for pupils. The procedures for tracking the progress that pupils make have been recently improved and are good. However, teachers do not always use the information collected effectively to set sufficiently challenging work. The school recognises the need to involve pupils more effectively in evaluating their own progress and how they might improve their performance. The school's recent track record shows its good capacity to make any necessary improvements.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- ensure teachers in each class consistently set challenging work so that all pupils make at least good progress
- delegate specific leadership and management responsibilities amongst staff to more effectively involve them in school improvement
- involve pupils more in evaluating for themselves how well they are doing and how they might improve

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## 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Petherton Junior School, South Petherton, TA13 5AG.

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. The pupils I spoke to were very enthusiastic about your school, as were your parents. I found your school to be a good one. It helps you to achieve well and attain standards by the end Year 6 that are above average in English, mathematics and science. You also attain high standards in ICT, art, music and drama. The quality of your artwork is exceptional and I particularly enjoyed viewing your close observational drawings.

You behave in an exemplary way and are developing into mature young people. You are also very polite and caring and considerate to others. The curriculum gives you a lot of exciting opportunities to extend your learning. These include the many out-of- school clubs you can join and the wide range of visits and visitors you experience. You told me you especially look forward to the residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6. All adults take very good care of you and ensure you are safe while in school.

Teachers give you interesting things to do and are keen for you to do well. However, in some classes you are sometimes given work that does not make you think hard enough and so your progress is not as always as good as it could be. You are beginning to evaluate for yourselves how well you are doing, though you do not have enough opportunities to improve your skills in doing this. The headteacher works hard to make sure the school is a good one. It would be helpful if some of her responsibilities were shared amongst other staff so they can be more involved in helping the school improve further. A special word of thanks to the members of the school council who spent time talking to me. You are a credit to your school.

What I have asked your school to do now:

- make sure that pupils in each class are always given work that makes them think hard so they all make at least good progress
- enable more staff to have responsibility in helping the school to improve further
- involve you more in evaluating for yourselves how well you are doing and how you might improve.

You can help too by keeping up the good work you are doing. I hope you continue to enjoy your learning and remain being so kind and considerate to others.

Best wishes, Melvyn Hemmings Lead inspector

6 December 2007



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Lead inspector