

Southfields Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110691
Local Authority	City of Peterborough
Inspection number	325199
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Palmer
Headteacher	Mrs L Martin
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2005
School address	Whittlesey Road Peterborough PE2 8PU
Telephone number	01733 562873
Fax number	01733 703329

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: boys' performance, why pupils' writing skills are weaker than in other subjects and how effectively the school's strategies are addressing these issues: the quality of the school's community cohesion and the extent to which subject leaders are enabling improved performance in their subjects and through the school.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, discussions with the headteacher, governors and staff, scrutiny of school information and its self-evaluation and samples of work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessment, as given in its self-evaluation were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school is situated in the midst of a mixed housing area within the city. Half of the pupils in this popular school come from outside the area that it serves. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below national expectations for pupils of their age. A higher than average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or have a statement of special educational need. The majority of pupils speak English as their first language and only a small number are from minority ethnic groups. A large percentage of the community are of third generation Italian backgrounds, which has led to the Italian consulate funding a teacher to improve community cohesion through language provision. The school has a speech and language enhanced resource provision for 18 pupils, which also caters for other pupils within the city. An after school club, not managed by the governing body, is held on the school premises.

The school has been awarded Active Sportsmark, Silver Artsmark, the Silver Eco award and the local authority Inclusion Chartermark. It has achieved the National Healthy Schools Standard for the second time. In 2008, it attained the Financial Management Standard in Schools. The school works with the Royal Horticultural Society as a training centre. It is one of 54 sustainable schools across the country and serves Peterborough and East Northants, working on projects to raise awareness of the leadership and management of sustainability.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It provides pupils with a wealth of excellent opportunities and experiences, both as young citizens and as learners. The needs of all pupils come first and they flourish in a secure and happy, yet challenging environment, in which much is expected of them. Parents are unanimously supportive of the school. One parent described it as 'an all round excellent school that gives pupils every chance to learn and achieve.'

Outstanding leadership and management of the school are fundamental to the school's great effectiveness. The headteacher's outstanding lead, vision, and monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, have resulted in a school which provides high quality education for its pupils. However, it is the innovative elements in its work that have added the extra dimension to pupils' learning experiences. Sustainability, and the eight doorways to promote this, have captured their imagination. Pupils feel responsible about the world, including globally, and this is a major school focus of school life. Planning shows exciting possibilities for the future, all of which are carefully costed and prioritised. A major strength is the effectiveness of the school in promoting a single vision and sense of belonging in which all cultures and backgrounds are celebrated to the benefit of the school and community. The school is at the centre of the community and provides excellent sharing and learning experiences for the benefit of all partners. The senior team contributes strongly to the effectiveness of the school through their focus on achievement, with excellent progress since the last inspection. Subject leaders' roles since the last inspection have also improved significantly. Their accurate understanding of the levels at which pupils are working and their contribution to the curriculum, have contributed significantly to pupils' faster rate of progress. A training programme for staff matches the needs of the school. The commitment of all staff adds to the school's strengths and its excellent capacity for further improvement. Governors are strong supporters of the school and because they know it very well, are able to oversee its work efficiently.

Pupils make outstanding progress through the school from their below average starting points. There has been a two year improvement in pupils' progress in English and mathematics, leading to pupils' above average standards in English, mathematics and science in 2008. Writing standards pulled English results down, including those of pupils capable of reaching higher levels. Lessons seen during the inspection and the school's excellent tracking of progress show that writing skills are improving rapidly because of outstanding teaching and tasks which focus on specific skills. However, the school has accurately identified for more regularly planned opportunities for writing tasks to be incorporated into other subjects to help embed pupils' skills. Boys' performance is catching up with that of girls, boosted by a curriculum that caters well for their needs and carefully planned support to raise their achievement. There is consistently good and regularly excellent quality of teaching and learning through the school and very effective academic guidance. Common practices across lessons and year groups and interesting and relevant learning stimuli encourage pupils' progress and give them a sharp focus on learning. Lessons move at a brisk pace, keeping pupils on their toes. Tasks are very carefully matched to the diverse needs of learners to enable pupils of all abilities, to make exceptionally good progress. Teaching offers opportunities for pupils to learn in many different ways, such as through imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT) and problem solving tasks. Pupils appreciate the structure to lessons, which have a clear purpose. Tracking of pupils' progress is very detailed. The leadership team's rigorous programme of assessments is fundamental to the school's work and the 'big board' has enabled staff to know pupils'

specific strengths and areas for improvement very accurately. Pupils know their learning targets, which are a great focus and motivator in lessons. Marking of their work is very helpful in promoting further progress. This is because it tells pupils what they have achieved and what they should do to make the next steps in learning. Those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who take longer to grasp some concepts are supported very effectively in the classroom or by withdrawal, so that they also make outstanding progress.

The outstanding curriculum has led to pupils' growing interest in learning. They are enthusiastic and often excited by the great variety of learning opportunities, which are promoting their excellent personal development and rising standards. Careful attention to the needs and interests of all pupils ensure that the curriculum is equally appropriate for boys and girls, with creativity an important aspect. This includes regular drama productions, and music. The choir's success in the 'Songs of Praise,' competition is a wonderful example of not only the high standards, commitment and perseverance of pupils but also the popular enrichment programme. This is a major strength of the curriculum and through the year offers pupils twelve activities in mixed age groups. These are as diverse as Italian culture and puppet making, and enable pupils to gain new practical, social and team work skills, and gain independence and confidence. Literacy and numeracy are the basis of all learning, incorporated into regular themed weeks, as well as discrete daily learning. Pupils speak highly of the very wide range of out of lesson creative, academic and sporting opportunities and the visits and interest groups that the school provides. The positive attitudes that pupils show for school and learning are demonstrated in the take-up of the homework club, which is open to families, and the lunch time study sessions which offer help for pupils who find aspects of their work difficult. Provision for those pupils with particular gifts and talents is strong, extends into the community and matches their strengths. Italian, which is taught in Year 3 and 4, is another example of the school's commitment to developing its relationships with the community.

At the heart of the school's work is pupils' outstanding personal development. They love being at school because so much is on offer. Consequently, their attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They understand through the curriculum and daily school life that their school is part of a community which values everybody's uniqueness and their diversity. Pupils understand that life is about making choices and the school ensures that they have all the information to make the right choices. For example, it gives pupils many opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and others, which they take great pride in and which build up their confidence and self-esteem. They have very clear ideas of what is right and wrong and this shows in their mature behaviour, care for each other and respect for staff. Staff model expectations outstandingly well, in this inclusive and caring school. The excellent lead that the school takes on sustainability has resulted in pupils who not only know how to safeguard the world but who are putting their understanding into actions. This includes spending time in the environmental area, caring for the fruit, vegetables and flowers that are growing there. The school council is another platform for pupils' excellent personal development. School councillors are presently looking to improve the park, for the benefit of the community and have planned a meeting with local councillors to investigate the way forward. Meaningful jobs and roles enable pupils to practise their personal skills and develop important skills for the future. The school has made outstanding progress in the development of enterprise activities. Mini businesses, toy sales, selling flowers and vegetables and running charity events, along with above average literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, promote pupils' good economic well-being. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy, eat nutritiously and keep safe and fit because the school has planned learning methods carefully

within the informative and often imaginatively presented personal, social, health and citizenship education programme.

Pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. Pupils, including those in the enhanced speech and language provision, feel safe in school and well cared for. The very positive relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils' confidence and trust. All procedures are in place to safeguard them and to help ensure their welfare, health and safety. Induction procedures, for example, help new pupils to settle in quickly. Those who start at other than the expected times are allocated a 'buddy' and their views on their new school are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's care. The school's respect for parents and its desire for them to be involved in their children's education, promote close home/school links. Regular family learning programmes, family outings, the gardening club, and a monthly welfare drop-in show very clearly the school's commitment to community links in what a parent described as 'this big family.' The school has many other strong partnerships, which benefit pupils equally well. These include outside agencies who offer specialist help for pupils with social, emotional and learning difficulties.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum so that pupils can practise and refine their skills through other subjects

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southfields Junior School, Peterborough, PE2 8PU

I enjoyed my recent visit to your school very much. Thank you for making me so welcome. I also thank those of you who had lunch with me and gave up part of your lunch time to tell me your thoughts about everything that you do and learn. During the day, I was able to see the many ways in which you are involved in your school. The jobs you do and the skills that you learn help to prepare you for secondary school extremely well. You are showing your good understanding of the need to have healthy lifestyles by keeping fit and safe and eating healthily. I send my congratulations to the choir for their tremendous achievement in reaching the final of the 'Songs of Praise' competition. Very well done! This letter will tell you the judgements that I have made about your school.

You enjoy school a great deal, make friends and get on well with each other. You and your parents are proud of your school. You have a right to be. Your school is outstanding. You make excellent progress by the end of Year 6 and achieve above average standards. This is because teaching is outstanding and you work hard in lessons. Writing standards are not quite as good as those in reading, mathematics and science but they are improving quickly. I have asked your headteacher, who leads your school exceptionally well, to put more writing opportunities into other lessons, to quicken progress. You told me that learning is often really interesting. I agree. The staff work hard for you. The chances they offer you to choose activities each term and to take part in a great choice of clubs and visits, help you to learn lots of new skills. You are proud of being a sustainable school. The very well performed assembly, 'The 8 felt pigs and the waste it wolf.' got the message across clearly about the importance of caring for our world, within our community and globally.

I send you my best wishes for the future and hope that you will continue to make the most of the wonderful opportunities your school offers you.

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector