

# Southmead School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	113139
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325760
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Lucas
Headteacher	Gill Gillett
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 June 2000
School address	Wrafton Road Braunton Devon EX33 2BU
Telephone number	01271 812448
Fax number	01271 812448
Email address	admin@southmead.devon.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' workbooks, information collected by the school on pupils' progress and scrutinised other policies and procedures. Inspectors also considered the 63 responses to the parents' questionnaires. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The achievements and progress of all pupils especially in English and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management and how performance is evaluated and the information used to improve the school.
- The quality of lessons and how senior managers check this.
- The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Pupils come from Braunton and surrounding villages. It also serves a nearby military base and this leads to a higher than average turnover of pupils as families come and go from time to time. Most pupils starting in Reception have average abilities. This school has had a recent period of significant upheaval in both headship and staffing. A new headteacher took up post about eight weeks before the inspection. There is a small proportion of vulnerable pupils who have significant emotional or behaviour problems.

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENT

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

4

Capacity for sustained improvement

4

### Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

This school has had a period of three years where pupils' achievements have been declining. This has been a particular problem in English but their progress in mathematics has also been too variable. The school's self-evaluation procedures have not been robust or accurate enough to indicate precisely whether pupils are making sufficient progress. Management and leadership are not sufficiently developed throughout the school and the legacy of weak self-evaluation means the school does not have an adequate capacity to improve. Improvements recommended at the last inspection are not yet well established.

The new headteacher has made a very good start in identifying some key changes that are required to begin to secure improvement. Parents, pupils and staff commented very positively about the headteacher. A good ethos and supportive culture are now providing a better footing to move the school forward and there is a determination amongst senior staff and governors to remedy weaknesses. Governors have not been as challenging as they should have been because of a lack of understanding about how well the school was performing.

Some improvements have been made recently. In particular, this has led to better provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage where educational provision is now satisfactory. A more rigorous school-wide system to record pupils' achievements has been introduced but it is not yet robust or systematically used to accurately measure pupils' progress. Neither is it used effectively to set challenging targets for individuals and groups of pupils to ensure that there are consistently high expectations of them. Not enough has been done to formally check the quality of lessons. Consequently, teaching and assessment are too variable across the school. While some is good, the quality of teaching overall is inadequate. In particular there is not enough good teaching in key subjects to ensure that pupils make good progress. This means that by the time pupils leave Year 6, although the majority of pupils reach average levels of attainment, too few reach the higher levels, especially in English. Some pupils with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities, however, make good progress both in their personal and academic development. This is because the school successfully nurtures these most vulnerable pupils enabling them to participate fully and engage well with their learning. Good links are established with a variety of local support agencies. Day-to-day supervision and care of pupils are good and staff are diligent and watchful to ensure pupils are safe but the school does not meet all the requirements for safeguarding pupils.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning and especially to the new headteacher whom they believe has given them a better say in what goes on in school. They are active, through the regular physical education, daily 'take 10' activities and clubs. They are also confident and mostly behave well, especially in lessons. Despite some academic underachievement, the basic skills and personal development of most pupils mean they are satisfactorily prepared for their next steps towards future economic well-being.

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

- Ensure that procedures and practices to safeguard pupils comply with requirements, especially regarding the necessary documents that should be kept.
- Improve pupils' achievements and raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:
  - establishing robust processes to check the ongoing progress of individuals and groups of pupils and use information gathered to set challenging performance targets
  - ensuring that targets and the assessment of pupils' progress are used to inform teaching so that it is well matched to the needs of all pupils
  - improving the quality of lessons to provide stimulating activities that engage and challenge all pupils and ensure that time is used effectively both in whole class and small group sessions.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by:
  - developing more rigorous procedures and processes for self-evaluation, particularly focusing on pupils' performance
  - ensuring that all subject leaders, especially for English and mathematics, have the support, skills and opportunities to monitor and improve the quality of learning
  - ensuring that governors are kept well informed enabling them to provide effective support and challenge to the school and fulfil their statutory duties.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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In lessons observed, learning was mostly satisfactory. However, learning overall is not secure and is not promoting consistently good progress from year to year in order to eliminate the underachievement in Key Stages 1 and 2, given the pupils broadly average starting points. In most lessons pupils are willing to engage with

their tasks and activities, listening well to their teachers. They work effectively together and where required, talk sensibly to each other. Often the pace at which pupils complete their work is slow either because they do not understand what they have to do or because the task does not have enough appeal or challenge. This is particularly true when pupils are undertaking small-group work. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks showed that the consistency, quality and amount of work is too variable, especially in English. Recent initiatives, for example 'talk for writing', to support pupils' skills in writing are having a positive effect on pupils' achievements but attainment in English was below average in 2008 and early indications suggest there is only a slight improvement this year. Learning in mathematics is also not consistent enough to promote overall good progress from year to year.

Outcomes for the school's most vulnerable pupils are good. Some of these pupils have very specific learning difficulties while others need help to integrate better with their peers either because of emotional turmoil or poor behaviour. The good individual support they receive enables them to take part fully in lessons and other activities. Older pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and they are aware of the importance of staying healthy, especially through being active. Many pupils have healthy snacks at break times. Pupils say that staff deal with issues of behaviour and bullying appropriately.

Satisfactory spiritual development is gained through assemblies and aspects of the creative curriculum and most pupils display appropriate attitudes to each other, for example during break times and when working together in lessons. Cultural development is satisfactory, reflecting an adequate though underdeveloped range of opportunities offered to broaden understanding of cultures within the United Kingdom and those worldwide.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	4
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3

<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.

## How effective is the provision?

In most lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory though sometimes barely adequate to make sure that pupils make enough progress. This means that too few pupils make consistent progress year on year in key subjects. Characteristics of weaker lessons included a slow pace, pupils not understanding what they had to do and tasks that were not challenging or stimulating. There is a small proportion of good teaching, especially where the teacher's subject knowledge is well developed, when activities are interesting and when class management ensures that the best use is made of the time available. For example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children enjoyed looking for fossils and in Years 3 and 4, a well-organised physical education lesson meant that time was used very productively and pupils were able to make good progress.

Assessment is not rigorous enough across the school. It is not having enough impact on guiding teachers in how to plan the activities that ensure that all pupils are challenged effectively, especially the higher-attaining pupils. Marking of pupils' work is not systematic or rigorous enough to ensure that all pupils know what they need to do to improve. Adults and pupils have good relationships and this means that learning can take place in a supportive classroom atmosphere. The curriculum provides a wide range of activities in different subjects including information and communication technology. Pupils' experiences are suitably enhanced by visits to places of interest and clubs, but the curriculum in key areas is not yet enabling enough pupils to make consistently good progress and reach higher levels, especially in English.

The school has identified a range of different groups of pupils, including its most potentially vulnerable, who receive various types of additional tailored support, guidance and help to meet their needs. Pupils in one group who lacked self-confidence created some outstanding artwork making clay faces attached to tree trunks, and other pupils had the opportunity to discuss their feelings and concerns about moving on to their next schools. These and other strategies used to promote self-esteem and improve behaviour are successful. Teaching assistants provide good individual support for pupils who have additional needs, for example giving opportunities for them to talk about any concerns and providing focused support in lessons.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	4
The use of assessment to support learning	4
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?

Despite the new headteacher's good efforts since taking up post, the procedures and processes to manage and secure improvement in the school remain weak. Governors and senior staff in recent years have not had a full grasp of pupils' declining achievements and have therefore not been effective in improving provision. Key subject leaders, though experienced and knowledgeable, have not been enabled to have the impact they should. The leadership team as a whole has not been effective in driving up standards in recent years. Target setting is not used effectively and the school has not been aspirational in what it wants its pupils to achieve. There are, however, clear signs that a culture of openness and improvement is developing within the whole school community.

The school has a number of very vulnerable pupils and there is a significant amount of pupil movement into and from the school. Good processes exist to integrate new pupils into the school community. All pupils have equal access to the activities provided. The school has recently started an initiative to help pupils who find sporting activities more challenging in order to encourage them take a more active part in and enjoy this aspect of the curriculum. A recent questionnaire to parents and the development of the pupils' school council are providing good opportunities for parents and pupils to express their views and ideas about the school. This is welcomed in the school community.

The school does not meet the requirements for safeguarding children because its paperwork does not contain all the information it should. However, the staff are diligent and watchful ensuring that any matters of concern are raised in an appropriate way and the school links well with support agencies when required. The school has very good processes for following up absences and for when pupils move to other schools. Good links are established with the military base whose families make up a significant proportion of pupils. Relationships with parents are satisfactory and improving significantly, an aspect of the school that has been a focus for the new headteacher.

The school successfully takes part in a range of local events. A very positive development is the local 'extended schools' alliance providing a number of activities which are meeting the needs of parents and pupils. One recent activity involved pupils working with a local museum and library. The school has made an adequate start in developing and extending its work with its community and that of communities further afield.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3

The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly because staff have had recent effective support and training. This has led to improvements in the environment and the range of activities provided. There is a satisfactory level of challenge in the activities and tasks provided for the children and therefore most make satisfactory progress. Appropriate observations of learning are recorded to support curriculum planning. There is a lack of consistency across the two classes in providing the stimulating tasks and activities necessary to raise children's achievements. There has been a lack of good leadership, exacerbated by some temporary staffing issues, though the new headteacher, together with staff, has clear views about what needs to be done to improve provision further. The curriculum is suitably broad to ensure that all six areas of learning are planned for. Children behave well and willingly participate in their learning. They care for their environment and select and pack away their equipment carefully. Adults are successful in helping the children reach their next steps though not all are always as engaged with the children during activities as they could be.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents have positive views about the school and several parents commented very favourably about the new headteacher. Typical of these comments were '... in the short time the new head has been in position there has been a great change, which is greatly welcomed'. Some parents expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying and a few were concerned about the progress their children were making. The school has worked hard to improve behaviour and inspectors observed good behaviour throughout the inspection. Pupils who met with inspectors were not concerned about bullying and felt that the staff dealt with any issues quickly. The inspection team agrees with the parents who were concerned about their children's progress.

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Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southmead School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we asked them to record an answer against all

the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 63 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 204 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	21	5	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southmead School, Braunton, EX33 2BU

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection of your school. Most of you enjoy school and you told us that you think the new headteacher has made a difference. We think so too. During the inspection you behaved very well. Please make sure you continue to do so because it will help to make your learning better.

We decided that there are some good things about your school, for example the way it helps those of you who need extra support. However, it is not helping you all to learn as well as it should do. We have said to the headteacher and governors that they need to make improvements in your lessons in order for you to make better progress, especially in English and mathematics. We have asked them to make sure that they collect more information about how well you are doing and check that everyone is learning as well as they should. We want the school to set some challenging targets for you. This will mean that all the teachers will need to work together. The staff look after you well day to day, but we have asked the headteacher to improve some important documents, that all schools have to have, about making sure you continue to be safe in school.

You have a good idea about keeping healthy and are very active in your break times and physical education lessons. Keep it up!

We know that the school will have a very busy time ahead of it in order to put everything right but you can do your part by always working really hard. Some of my colleagues will come back to the school to check how well everything is going.

Yours faithfully

Daniel Towl  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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