

Sholing Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116108
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	326333
Inspection date	10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Gehane Gordelier HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	163
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Teresa Diggle
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Houghton
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Heath Road Sholing Southampton SO19 2QF
Telephone number	023 80447447
Fax number	0

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- The progress made by different groups of learners, particularly low-achieving boys and higher-attainers.
- How effectively teachers and managers make use of information and data about pupils to ensure pupils' needs are consistently well met.
- How successfully leaders and managers at all levels set a clear direction leading to improvements and high-quality care and education.

Evidence was gathered from: school documentation; the analysis of pupils' work and their progress; observation of lessons, some of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also held discussions with the headteacher, the inclusion manager and one group of staff and another of pupils. They also took account of responses in the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. A higher proportion of pupils than is the case nationally are eligible for free school meals. Fewer pupils than is the case in most schools are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language; however, numbers are increasing year on year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools nationally and includes pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties as well as speech, language and communication needs and physical disabilities.

The headteacher has been in post for a year, having previously been the acting headteacher and prior to that the school's substantive deputy headteacher. At the time of inspection two members of the senior leadership team were not present. The restructure of senior management in the school has led to the appointment of two new members to the senior leadership team. The school has a number of nationally accredited awards, including the Healthy School and Investors in People awards. External providers work closely with the school to provide breakfast and after school clubs as well as family courses on literacy, numeracy and behaviour management.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sholing Infant is a good and improving school. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. One parent echoes a sentiment expressed by many: 'The school really feels like an extended family.' The school has developed good partnerships with parents, the local junior school and outside services to support the well-being of pupils. Staff and governors work very well as a team and this helps to ensure pupils enjoy their learning experiences and receive a good and well-rounded education.

Attainment on entry to the school is below expected levels, particularly in language and literacy. Children progress well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the end of Reception most are working within age-related expectations. Good planning and organisation ensures a smooth transition into Year 1. Until 2008 standards by the end of Year 2 were broadly in line with national averages. The greater focus on raising standards and ensuring that no pupil underachieves is accelerating rates of progress. If pupils continue to progress as well as they have since September 2008, they are set to attain standards that are above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in Year 2 girls continue to perform better than boys with too few boys attaining higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is successfully narrowing the gap and boys in Year 1 are already attaining higher levels than has been the case in previous years. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as successfully as their peers. This is due to appropriately targeted additional support and careful monitoring of the impact of intervention strategies. A good example is the recent focus on letters and sounds which is helping to raise standards of reading and writing throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate particularly good speaking and listening skills for their age. They are also developing good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The increased focus on developing pupils' investigative skills is leading to good and improving levels of progress in science. Although the progression of skills is tracked and monitored for reading, writing and mathematics, the school has yet to assess how well pupils are progressing in their development of skills in other subjects.

Attendance figures are good overall and are improving in Reception. Most pupils attend well because they thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school life. They say they love coming to school and this is evident from their outstanding behaviour and the way they value and look after the school environment. Pupils' contributions to the school and the wider community are excellent. They play an active role in helping the school to be a safe and happy place. The school council, for example, has helped to choose play equipment. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of other faiths and welcome pupils from other countries and cultures. They show a good level of moral awareness by supporting each other and showing consideration for the natural environment. Pupils are aware of the value of the rainforest and its many plants and animals. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with pupils showing a high level of responsibility and maturity for their age. Pupils' knowledge of staying safe and healthy is excellent. They enjoy a good range of physical activities and healthy food. They also understand the importance of washing hands and individuals can explain why this might help to prevent a flu epidemic. They are very clear about road, fire and water safety and the dangers of damage to the environment. Older pupils can also talk about possible dangers of using the internet. The basic personal, social and academic skills pupils develop prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

Teaching in the school is good and some is outstanding. Teaching typically caters well for the needs of every child and takes good account of their interests and aptitudes. Teachers plan lessons that are fun, imaginative and exciting and expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. They take full account of the different ways in which pupils learn and make good use of the wide range of resources and the outside learning environment. A good example is the use of ICT to engage and motivate pupils, which works particularly well with boys who were previously reluctant to read and write. In a good numeracy lesson in Year 1, the teacher made very effective use of the interactive whiteboard to teach pupils how to estimate using non-standard units of measurement. Pupils were captivated by the picture of a tall tree and the images of monkeys that were dragged and dropped along the length of the tree. They estimated how many 'monkeys long' the tree was and then checked the reasonableness of their estimation. One pupil remarked, 'the larger the monkey the more space they take up'. In most lessons pupils are encouraged to learn to work collaboratively and independently. In the minority of cases in which teaching is less effective, the content of lessons is not always sufficiently purposeful, the pace of learning is slow and the skills of additional adults are not always used to best effect.

The curriculum is well planned and has recently been improved to ensure it caters more fully for the needs and interests of those pupils who were previously underachieving, particularly lower-attaining boys. A significant strength is the use of a more thematic approach which promotes cross-curricular links, which is in turn providing a more engaging and relevant curriculum. Strong links with the wider community and other schools enhances the curriculum; pupils also benefit from the opportunity to learn French. There is a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities and clubs and participation levels are high. Visits and visitors make a major contribution to the curriculum; for example, the Punch and Judy man helped Year 2 understand about traditional entertainment at the seaside.

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is excellent because of the high quality of systems for monitoring well-being and progress and the quality of staff and governance. The use of assessment strategies is developing well and pupils are increasingly encouraged to assess their own work and that of their peers. However, pupils are not always encouraged to articulate what they are learning or how they are progressing. This at times reduces the impact of assessment strategies during the course of a lesson. Pupils' work is marked in a way that is encouraging and helps them to know what to do to improve. They benefit from having target books for reading, writing and mathematics to help remind them about next steps in learning and what they can do to help themselves. Pupils with identified needs and learning difficulties are cared for well and make good progress because of the quality of learning support and focused targets in their individual education plans. Half of pupils originally on the special needs register have progressed to such an extent that they no longer require specific support. Links with the junior school and local colleges are strong; outside agencies are used exceptionally well to help ensure the safety and progress of pupils.

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher who has helped to develop a sharper focus on standards and progress. This has improved the way data and information about pupils is analysed and used and is contributing to raising standards. New governors and senior and middle leaders, who are also new in post, are developing their roles successfully and are having a positive impact on the overall effectiveness of the school. The school has undertaken a good level of self-evaluation and that has enabled senior leaders to gain an accurate view of strengths and areas in need of improvement. However, documents used to help plan further improvements, as well as those which evaluate progress, do not focus sharply enough on the

outcomes for different groups of learners. This is limiting the impact of some leaders and managers in helping to drive improvement and further raise standards for targeted groups of pupils.

The school makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion. This has led to a greater level of engagement with the local and wider community, with more parents working in partnership with the school to support the learning and well-being of their children.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The use of the 'Managing Our Own Time' approach encourages children to begin taking responsibility for their learning from an early age. This also provides good opportunities for children to 'have a go' and try unfamiliar activities and new learning in a safe environment, as well as to work cooperatively with others. By the end of Reception, children make particularly good progress in their personal and social and creative development as well as in their ability to think, count, use numbers and in their language and communication skills. The extent to which children develop positive attitudes to learning and learn to behave, work independently and play nicely with others is outstanding. The school is working hard to minimise the impact of staff changes in this part of the school and is already raising standards of reading and writing more successfully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Assess skills across all subjects and embed the use of assessment strategies in lessons.
- Ensure that documents to help plan and evaluate progress include a sharper focus on outcomes for different groups of learners.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	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 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?	1

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

23 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sholing Infant School, Southampton, SO19 2QF

Thank you for helping us to feel welcome when we came to inspect your school.

We really enjoyed talking to many of you and were very impressed with lots of things about Sholing Infant School. We have judged that you go to a good school and can see why you love school so much. Well done to you and all the staff and governors and please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires and writing comments. These are some of the things about your school that we think are outstanding:

- your behaviour and how much you enjoy coming to school
- how much you know about being healthy and staying safe
- how you help your school and the wider community
- how well the school looks after you and helps you
- how even the youngest children learn how to behave, become independent and work and play nicely together.

We know that all the staff and governors want to do their best for you, so we have asked them to do two things to help them to make the school even better than it already is. We have asked that your teachers check how well you are doing and what you are learning for all subjects and in all lessons. We have also asked the school to make sure they always consider you and your different needs when they plan changes and check how well things are going.

I am so pleased to have had the opportunity to come to your school and to meet you.

Yours faithfully

Gehane Gordelier

Her Majesty's Inspector