

# Southborough CE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118712
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326878
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacqueline White 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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	403
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Evernden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Savage
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Broomhill Park Road Southborough Tunbridge Wells TN4 0JY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 529682
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 512619

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a very large school, which has an Early Years Foundation Stage in two Reception classes. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but includes a high proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has a specialist speech and language unit for up to 18 pupils.

Most pupils are of White British heritage but the number from minority ethnic groups has risen significantly in the last three years. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school has Artsmark Gold from the Arts Council. It has also achieved Healthy Schools status and Eco Schools silver level status.

## 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 and improving school; some aspects of its work are outstanding. Nurtured by the very supportive ethos of the school, pupils grow into well-rounded, confident individuals who have a strong sense of belonging to the school and wider community. The good leadership and management of the headteacher and governors have been strongly focused on improving the outcomes for pupils, who are now making good progress. Equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils is promoted well and the needs of vulnerable pupils are met effectively so they take a full part in school life. Parents' overwhelming support of the school is captured in a comment from a parent with a child in Year 1: 'The dedication of teachers, their compassion for the children, and the standard of pastoral care are exceptional.' Parents greatly value pupils' outstanding personal development, which is derived from a rich mix of experiences that pupils thoroughly enjoy. Strong links with other schools, including some in Europe through the European Comenius project, enable pupils to meet others from different backgrounds and appreciate their company.

Whilst children in the Early Years Foundation Stage made good progress, standards at the end of Year 6 in 2008 were broadly average. This indicates that pupils' progress slowed in Key Stages 1 and 2 and was satisfactory overall. Inspectors' observations and the good systems for monitoring teaching and pupils' progress show pupils are now making better progress. Target setting is being used more effectively to raise expectations and challenge pupils appropriately. Consequently, the rate of pupils' progress has accelerated in the past year, resulting in rising standards. These gains have not yet consolidated into a sustained trend of pupils making good progress over time.

Overall, teaching is good. Lesson planning has been an important focus. Teachers' expertise in using assessment information to link learning objectives closely to pupils' individual levels of ability is growing rapidly. However, this is not yet consistently applied across different classes. Sometimes there is too much direct teaching rather than teachers providing opportunities for pupils to learn by investigating in small groups or individually to consolidate and extend their understanding independently. In addition, too many pupils are unclear about how they can improve their work.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. They appreciate the wide range of sporting opportunities and other extra-curricular clubs that extend the good curriculum. Pupils relate very well to one another and to staff. They are proud of their school, assist well in its smooth running and make a very positive contribution to the wider community through initiatives such as the Better Living in Southborough Society and Eco Schools.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2008. Her leadership is clear and authoritative, with raising standards at the heart of her agenda. She has quickly gained the respect and support of governors, staff, pupils and parents. Inspectors agree with the parent who commented, 'The new headteacher has initiated much more systematic ways of working to help teachers increase pupils' achievement and robustly track and measure it.' The leadership team supports the headteacher well and is rigorous in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The school has successfully tackled weaknesses identified in the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. Governors are dedicated and increasingly effective in holding the school to account for its performance.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children usually enter the Reception classes with skills and capabilities in line with those expected for their age, but with some limited skills in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress to reach above average standards in most areas of learning, with outstanding development in their personal, social and emotional skills. Children behave well and respond with enjoyment to the learning environment. Warm and supportive relationships contribute to their excellent personal development. Children feel safe and able to ask for help if they need to. They develop good understanding of personal hygiene and make healthy choices about what they eat and drink.

Staff are deployed well to support the children's learning, operating effectively as a team to share ideas and respond to the needs and interests of the children. They provide children with a variety of stimulating learning opportunities and a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated play. However, outdoor learning is not yet making a full contribution to children's development. Staff work very well with parents, ensuring a smooth start to school life and a good transition to Year 1.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Embed systems for target setting, reviewing and tracking pupils' progress to secure a trend of good progress over time.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring all teachers and teaching assistants use assessment information to match learning objectives closely to pupils' needs.
- Develop teaching methods that increase pupils' capacity to learn independently, including marking that gives consistently clear feedback to pupils about how to improve their work.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

As a result of the introduction of good systems for reviewing and tracking pupils' progress, the pace of their progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 has increased so that pupils, including those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, are now beginning to maintain good progress. In 2008, standards at end of both key stages were broadly average. However, the school's assessment information shows that standards are rising and pupils are on track to achieve revised, more challenging targets in 2009. No groups of pupils within the school are significantly underachieving.

The new headteacher has introduced good strategies to increase teachers' and teaching assistants' understanding of National Curriculum levels so that they can plan and evaluate learning precisely. Past performance data reveals weaknesses in pupils' writing and science, and in the achievement of some more able pupils. The strategies now in place are addressing these issues.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are reflective, with a strong sense of collective responsibility. They thoroughly enjoy learning and are very supportive of each other. A member of the school council commented, 'Our school helps us

learn and work together as one team.' Behaviour in classes and around the school is very good. A happy and caring learning environment has been established.

Pupils feel very safe and valued and have great confidence in approaching members of staff for help and support whenever needed. They value the views of others and take part in many activities to widen their horizons. Pupils have a good grasp of the importance of leading a healthy life. They engage diligently in games and sport activities and show good understanding of the positive impact of physical exercise on health. The school council participates in decision making, for example offering ideas about the development of the playground. Pupils make an excellent contribution in the wider community. They are involved in many projects and raise funds to support those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Pupils' improving key skills and well-developed social skills ensure a good basis for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good but there are some inconsistencies in practice. In the best lessons, challenging tasks are well matched to pupils' needs, teachers revisit learning objectives to probe pupils' understanding and pupils themselves are involved in evaluating their learning against clear success criteria. In less effective lessons, the pace is slower and learning objectives are not sufficiently challenging because they have not been developed in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Pace is particularly an issue where teachers are questioning the whole class for significant periods of time. Questioning is not open or 'snappy' enough and does not always extend the more able. Sometimes lessons are too teacher-led and this reduces the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

Teaching assistants work well in the classroom and provide good well-targeted support for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) enhances pupils' learning and enjoyment. Pupils' books are marked regularly but in some instances teachers' feedback to pupils about what they need to do improve their work is limited.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It is enriched by a wide range of visits to promote enjoyment and extend knowledge and understanding of different cultures, faiths and communities. Pupils respond well to the wealth of extra-curricular activities provided by the school.

The thematic approach to the curriculum introduces pupils to storytellers, artists, musicians and individuals from the local community. It also provides opportunities for pupils to learn about and embrace difference. For example, the disability awareness week increases understanding of disability discrimination. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn French, which is offered at all key stages. Very good ICT provision also contributes to their strong engagement with learning. Most pupils are making good progress in the core skills of literacy and numeracy. The school is particularly successful in developing boys' interest in reading and poetry.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The care and support extended to pupils are strengths of the school. Safeguarding, child protection procedures and risk assessments meet the legal requirements. Bullying is rare and is not an issue highlighted by pupils or parents. Vulnerable pupils receive very good support that is carefully tailored to their needs. Pupils in the language unit have their needs met through specialised provision with outside professional expertise.

Academic guidance is improving and parents are better informed about their children's progress. This is confirmed by parents who commented in the questionnaire about the improvement in communications. Pupils' progress is reviewed regularly and some pupils are aware of their targets for improvement. However, too many are not clear about the steps they must take to reach them, and, in addition, lack the necessary skills and success criteria to evaluate their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have rightly focused on developing systems that directly impact on improving pupils' achievement. Assessment procedures are now accelerating pupils' progress. The monitoring of teaching gives due emphasis to how well pupils are learning. A cycle of rigorous evaluation of the school's work is becoming established and making staff accountable for pupils' attainment. Staff have embraced rapid change with a shared determination to improve outcomes for pupils. Teamwork is a strength of the school. Strong and meaningful partnerships with other agencies underpin the school's good contribution to community cohesion.

The leadership team have a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve further. Self-evaluation is good. It clearly identifies the school's strengths and development points. Written plans for improvement provide a good basis for moving the school forward. Subject co-ordinators are aware of their newly defined roles. They are hardworking and developing into effective and confident leaders rapidly.

Governance is good. The governing body has been restructured and supported by well focused training. Governors are now well informed. They work cohesively with the senior leadership team and are increasingly skilful at analysing data in order to influence the strategic direction of the school and drive improvement.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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 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**

8 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Southborough C of E Primary School, Southborough TN4 0JY

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting some of you and found our conversations with you very helpful in making our judgements.

Yours is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. Most of you thoroughly enjoy learning, and appreciate the good curriculum and many extra activities you take part in. The strong and positive relationships in your school support your excellent personal development. You feel safe and very well cared for, and know there is always someone to go to if you have any problems.

Your new headteacher is doing a good job. She is very well supported by other leaders in the school, including governors. We were impressed with how your school feels like one big family, with everyone working together to keep on improving things. You have made an important contribution through the school council and through the excellent work that you do in the community.

You are making good progress in lessons and teachers are working hard to make sure you learn well. We have asked staff to do the following things:

- review your progress regularly to make sure it is consistently good
- improve teaching by always matching lesson activities closely to your needs
- give you clear feedback about how you can improve your work and help you to develop skills for learning on your own.

You can do your bit by reading teachers' comments on your work carefully and being sure you understand how you can improve your work. Thank you again for your help during the inspection.

Very best wishes for the future

Jacqueline White

Her Majesty's Inspector