

South Borough Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118305
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339188
Inspection dates	4–5 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Findlay
Headteacher	Caroline Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. In all, 17 lessons were observed, which included teachers in all 8 classes. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning documents, observation notes on teaching, reviews carried out by the local authority, minutes of governors' meetings and 43 parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the plans the school had for raising attainment in mathematics and science
- the use that teachers made of assessment information to plan for different groups of pupils
- the actions the school was taking to improve levels of attendance
- the quality of leadership of the three key subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school in which the proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The majority of these pupils have support for their communication skills. The proportion of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average as is the proportion of pupils for whom English is not their home language. Although in the recent past the school's roll had fallen, it is now on the rise, with a waiting list for places in its Nursery and Reception Class. The Nursery runs morning and afternoon sessions for two different groups of children. There are two independent pre-school providers based on the site. These are not managed by the governing body. A Children's Centre opened on the school site in 2008. The school has a significantly high mobility problem, with a large proportion of pupils arriving at, or leaving, the school at times other than the usual times of admission. The school has gained a number of awards including Investor in People, Nursery Quality Mark, Active Mark and Healthy School award. There has been no deputy headteacher in the school since October 2009.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This school continues to provide a satisfactory education for its pupils, as it did at the last inspection. However, several things have improved in the intervening time, despite some challenges in staffing. Strengths of the school include the excellent provision, outcomes and leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and, preparing children extremely well for the rest of their schooling. Partnerships with parents and carers, other stakeholders and the local authority are equally strong and contribute to breaking down barriers to pupils' learning and supporting progress and change well. The ways in which the school promotes community cohesion are numerous and of high quality, ensuring that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The strengths of the school are recognised and valued by parents.

Achievement is satisfactory, although there are discernable signs of improvement. However, the pace of improvement is not fast enough because too much teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory rather than good. In all classes, relationships, the management of pupils' behaviour and the use of technology by teachers are strengths. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent and, in too many cases, does not give pupils a clear picture of how to improve or how they themselves will know when they have been successful.

Pupils say that they enjoy school, a view echoed by almost all parents and carers. Specialist teaching and a host of extra-curricular activities contribute to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils are proud of their school and willingly take on extra responsibilities. They contribute to the local and wider communities very well and this adds to their strong understanding of multi-cultural matters on a more global scale. A consistent approach to the management of behaviour has led to much improved behaviour, with exclusions being almost a thing of the past.

Leaders and governors have a very clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development and the many improvements already noted are due to the excellent vision, ambition and drive of the headteacher. Some strategies and initiatives are relatively recent and, because of the school's collegiate approach to improvement, they are already having a noticeable effect. Although pupils' progress is well on the way to being good, and attainment in both mathematics and science has very recently accelerated due to strategies put in place, this has not happened quickly enough. However, the wide range of initiatives currently in place is being carefully monitored by the senior management team and the new curriculum teams, who are still coming to terms with their new roles.

Based on the improvements since the last inspection, the current levels of improvement

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and the plans for further improvement already in place, the school has a good capacity to sustain these improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To ensure that by July 2011, in key subjects by the end of Year 6, 90% of pupils reach levels expected for their age and make satisfactory progress, with 40% of pupils making good progress, by:
 - providing teachers with opportunities to learn/share strategies for accelerating progress
 - providing clear written feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work
 - strengthening the monitoring work of curriculum teams so that termly checks on progress are shared with teachers.
- By July 2011, ensure that 80% of teaching is good or better by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment data more effectively to set work that challenges all pupils
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to work together and take responsibility for their own learning
 - teaching using a wider range of active and creative opportunities to enhance pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory. In some individual lessons, progress is good, for example in a design and technology lesson in which pupils were inspired and excited about their learning and made good progress. Many lessons are based on practical activities. For example pupils in a numeracy lesson were trying to budget for a barbeque. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. In a small number of lessons, pupils are not as good at sustaining independent work, particularly when it is not challenging enough for them or they have been kept sitting for too long. However, where they are fully engaged in learning, their progress can be good. Overall, their positive attitudes support their satisfactory achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, as they are well supported within lessons and receive other special support from the excellent leadership of inclusion. The same can be said for the large number of pupils from a range of different ethnic groups. They make good progress, with some of them reaching the highest standards in the school, through consistent support.

Most pupils say they enjoy school and feel very safe, as they know that the school cares for them very well. Parents and carers agree with this. Pupils say that there are only very isolated incidents of bullying in the school and whenever it does occur, adults are quick to intervene. Behaviour is good in lessons and in the playground, with all groups of pupils both working and playing well together. This improved picture of behaviour is

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illustrated by a significantly low level of exclusions in recent terms. Pupils show a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of exercise and diet. They know which food has protein and carbohydrates for example. They are very active at playtime and many go to sporting club activities before and after school. This is reflected in two of their curriculum awards. Opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions and contribute to school life are excellent. Pupils help at playtimes, lunchtimes, hear younger ones read and take part in the school council. They are proud of the money they have raised for charities and know of the good links they have with schools abroad.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Excellent care, guidance and support are clearly illustrated by the wide range of activities and adults who support pupils' emotional needs. For example, 'The Green Room' is used as a safe haven for pupils at times of stress or misbehaviour. The school is taking on aspects of therapeutic play to support some of its pupils. Vulnerable groups of pupils are exceptionally well catered for by a range of adults, whilst pupils and their

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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parents and carers benefit from a wide range of very good family liaison activities. Courses organised by the school for its parents and carers are invariably over subscribed. Breakfast club and other additional out-of-school activities provide quality care and a valuable service for many parents. Pupils across the school are well supported by a good team of teaching assistants who work effectively with teachers to enable a range of vulnerable pupils to make good progress in their work. A consistent approach to the management of behaviour helps to create a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Although attendance rates are just below the national average, the school has used a very wide range of initiatives consistently to try to improve this figure. It has been successful in reducing unauthorised absence and the number of persistent absentees.

The curriculum is considerably enriched by club activities, visits and visitors. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning. Specialist teachers for several aspects of the creative curriculum provide very good additional high-quality opportunities for pupils to perform and take part in a range of out-of-school performances and workshops. Although over half of the lessons seen were good or better, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and is not consistently good enough to raise attainment further or help pupils to make faster progress in their learning. For example, although marking is supportive and regular it does not always indicate the next steps in pupils' learning. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and, as a result, behaviour management can often be of a light touch. However, not enough notice is taken of assessment data by teachers to provide appropriate challenges for the wide range of pupils' abilities in classes. This is more the case in the junior classes of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by her staff, has been notably effective in the school since the last inspection through her relentless drive to make improvements. Priorities for improvement were correctly identified. The Early Years Foundation Stage is now outstanding, the quality of learning for children with special education needs and/or disabilities has improved as have pupils' opportunities to contribute to their community. The care shown by the school to its pupils is now excellent and its safeguarding is good with some excellent elements in areas, such as extended services. This is reflected in

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the school achieving a Quality in Extended Services award. The school's relationship with parents and carers has helped remove many barriers to learning. Parents and carers have become much more involved in their own learning with the support of the school. Partnerships with other providers, such as family liaison, education welfare and many others are very strong and support the welfare of pupils very successfully.

The headteacher has ensured that data about pupils are mainly used very effectively by the leadership of the school, but not consistently by all teachers. As a result, progress in some subjects has been a little slower than leadership would have wanted. Sharing good practice between teachers has been started but the school has not been able to make best use of its most accomplished teachers in order to impact on teaching across the school. Governors have improved their committee structure, have created good opportunities for monitoring the school in action, and are in a strong position now to hold the school to account and take a much more strategic role in the development matters.

The school's commitment to equal opportunities is very evident in the way that it tracks the progress of different groups of pupils and gives extra support to a wide range of individuals and groups. Its approach to its own community and other communities on a much wider scale is excellent. The governors have analysed the school's needs, staff training has taken place, and a very comprehensive policy has been put into place and turned into actions. The outcomes have been greater engagement with the school and local communities together with genuine links with other schools nationally and internationally. The impact of this has been that pupils from all backgrounds get on well. For instance, a Nepalese pupil said that she had felt welcome from the moment she joined the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is highly successful in laying down a very secure foundation for children's future learning. Attainment on entry is at least below average and excellent induction arrangements ensure children settle quickly into the Nursery and parents are very happy. Relationships between adults and children are strong throughout and teamwork across this stage is very strong, including the good quality teamwork between parents/carers and practitioners. As a result, children are happy, feel very safe and keen to learn. They gradually make up lost ground and by the time they reach Year 1 almost all are ready to access the National Curriculum, having made excellent progress in their learning, reaching above average attainment. This is particularly the case in aspects of their language and mathematical development.

Year-on-year improvements have been made in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with the very detailed assessment programme playing a very large part in these improvements. This informs planning and ensures that learning is matched well to the needs of individual children. Teachers skilfully ensure that there is always a good balance between activities led by adults and those initiated by children themselves. Children's high level of enjoyment creates excellent attitudes to work and a willingness to begin to experiment in their learning. The rooms are stimulating and resources are used extremely well. Learning often moves seamlessly from inside to the outdoor classroom, where much development has taken place to make this truly part of the learning resources of both the Nursery and Reception classes.

The rapid progress that children make, the high quality provision of this part of the school and the well-qualified and highly-proficient team speak volumes about the excellent leadership of the unit.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The return of questionnaires from parents and carers was low. The vast majority of parents and carers, who responded, were very positive about the school. All said they were happy with their child's experience at this school. Over 95% of parents and carers who responded said their children enjoyed school, were kept safe, made enough progress and that they were informed about progress. The inspection endorses these

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positive remarks. A very small minority were concerned that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection could not find evidence to support this view and found that behaviour was at least good and sometimes exemplary.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Borough Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 249 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	60	15	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	40	25	58	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	40	25	58	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	44	23	53	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	44	21	49	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	42	21	49	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	42	21	49	3	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	35	21	49	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	37	24	56	0	0	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	23	22	51	6	14	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	40	18	42	6	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	40	19	44	4	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	58	18	42	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be. ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Borough Primary School, Maidstone ME15 6TL

I am writing to thank you all for being so welcoming to myself and my two inspector colleagues when we visited your school very recently. I'm sure you would like to know what we found.

You attend a satisfactory school which has many good and even excellent features. Here are some of the things we thought were good.

- The way adults in your school care for you is excellent.
- You, with the help of your teachers, make exceptionally strong contributions to your community, both in school and much further afield.
- The governors are very effective in helping the school to become more successful.
- The school has been very successful in making your parents feel part of your education.
- There are many good links made with the school that support how it works.
- r personal development is good in many ways.

Your headteacher and all the staff want to make the school even better for you. These are the things we have asked them to do.

- Improve the progress you make and your attainment in English, mathematics and science.
- Although there is already some good and outstanding teaching taking place we want it to be even better, especially by making sure the work you receive challenges you to do even better.

I am sure that you will do your best to attend regularly and work hard. Thank you for such an interesting visit.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones

Lead inspector

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