

Solent Junior School

Solent Road, Portsmouth, PO6 1HJ

Inspection dates 4–5 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Underpinning the school's success is the exceptionally strong leadership of its headteacher. She is very effectively supported by other senior leaders and governors.
- Very regular checking of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by both leaders and governors helps to ensure that weaker aspects are swiftly identified. Plans are speedily put in place to address them effectively.
- Recent improvement has been rapid and the school is already tackling weaknesses identified during this inspection. It is exceptionally well placed to improve further.
- Pupils' achievement is good and their attainment is above average, significantly so in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working above the levels expected for their age in these subjects is rising.
- Teaching quality is uniformly good and improving well. There are considerable strengths in the way new learning is demonstrated and explained; consequently, pupils learn quickly.
- The curriculum supports different pupils' needs very well and enthuses pupils to learn. The new curriculum and assessment requirements have been implemented very effectively.
- Excellent support is provided for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, their behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding, as are their attitudes to learning.
- The procedures for keeping pupils safe and free from harm are outstanding. Excellent relationships between pupils and with staff are evident.
- The outstanding support for pupils from service families helps them to make excellent progress.
- The governing body is very well informed and exceptionally thorough in checking the school's work and its impact on pupils' achievement.
- Parents are especially well informed about the school's work and their children's progress. In return they provide very good support to the school in a wide range of ways.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. There is some variation in the level of challenge in pupils' improvement targets.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always indicate what pupils have achieved or how to improve.
- Whilst the language pupils use in their writing tasks is very effective, their spelling and handwriting are not as good. This limits pupils' attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed all teachers who were teaching during the inspection. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Short visits were also made to lessons accompanied by senior staff. In addition, inspectors made a number of observations of group or individual activities which were to help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up. They heard a sample of pupils read and scrutinised a sample of pupils' written work.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff including senior and middle managers, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 64 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and a small number of parents bringing their children to school were also spoken to.
- Responses from the 22 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents including the school's records on current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to planning and monitoring and safeguarding were also looked at.

Inspection team

Diane Wilkinson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Beddard	Additional Inspector
Deborah Marklove	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-size junior school, with three classes in each year group.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported by school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- A small minority of pupils come from families where a parent is serving in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for pupil premium funding) is well below average. This additional funding is to provide extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The school works closely with a group of local schools in monitoring and development work.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been a number of staff absences over the past year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' progress and attainment in writing further by:
 - increasing younger pupils' ability to spell correctly
 - building on the strategies to support those whose recognition of the sounds letters make in words (phonics) is weak
 - providing more opportunities to improve pupils' handwriting and ensuring that all their recorded work is well presented
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make up ground in writing as well as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Improve teaching to typically outstanding levels through:
 - giving pupils more challenging targets to help guide their learning to the highest levels
 - ensuring that when marking pupils' recorded work, pupils know how well they have done, and advice given on how to improve is followed.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is exceptionally good at enabling senior staff to play a key role in supporting the school. This is a major reason why the school runs smoothly and continues to improve when a key member of the senior leadership team is absent.
- She is very ably supported by other key leaders, including subject leaders. Improvement in all areas of the school's work has accelerated over the past year. Areas of excellence, such as in pupils' behaviour and safety, have been maintained. New government requirements, for example related to the curriculum and assessment, have been introduced very successfully.
- Leaders and governors are very clear as to what still needs to be done to achieve excellence. This is apparent, for example, in the extra support now in place for pupils whose phonic skills are weak and the strong focus on improving spelling.
- Teaching quality is thoroughly and regularly checked, including by governors, in a wide range of ways. Teaching is always judged in terms of its impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, leaders and governors have an excellent awareness of its effect on learning and where further improvement is needed. Formal performance management procedures are very effective, leading to good opportunities for coaching or additional training.
- There is an outstanding commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and discouraging discrimination in any form. This is seen in the high quality promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school ensures that pupils develop an excellent understanding of British values such as tolerance and the importance of democracy. The attention given to discouraging extremist behaviour is outstanding.
- Safeguarding is given high priority and fully meets requirements. The policies and procedures are excellent, including for child protection.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support the achievement of those pupils who receive it. This is used mainly to provide additional teaching, and also support for those pupils experiencing emotional and social needs. In the case of the latter it is used exceptionally well.
- The additional sport funding is used very effectively to increase pupils' participation in, and enjoyment of, sport. In some areas, such as girls' football, pupils excel and the school has been awarded the gold kitemark by the Youth Sport Trust. Funding is also used to ensure staff increase their skills well in this area.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents who are very well informed about their children's progress through the reports they receive twice yearly. Their views are regularly sought, for example through the 'Parent Voice' meetings. Parents very effectively support their children in home learning tasks and work at school.
- The local authority correctly judges this successful school to need low support. However, the school benefits from the services provided. This is evident, for example, in governor training and advice on the headteacher's performance management which support the governing body especially well.
- **Governance of the school:**
 - The governing body fulfils its statutory duties especially well. Governors are extremely good at holding staff to account for their effectiveness in improving the quality of education and pupils' achievement. They work exceptionally well with staff to help drive forward improvement and are very well informed about the school's work. For example, benefiting from local authority and the headteacher's expert advice, their comparison of achievement in this school with others nationally and locally is very good. Through their very regular visits, governors have an excellent awareness of the effect that the good quality of teaching has on learning. Their monitoring of staff performance is very good. Governors have excellent information to help agree salary increases only for good performance and identify what is being done to tackle weaker teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are a credit to the school and their parents. Throughout the inspection, outstanding behaviour was observed. This supports pupils' learning exceptionally well, making Solent Junior School a very happy and safe place to be. Attendance levels are consistently above average.

- During lessons, pupils are fully engaged in their learning, keeping focused for a long time. They welcome really challenging tasks with great enthusiasm and commitment.
- Pupils show great respect for their teachers and each other. They work exceptionally well together in pairs or groups and listen respectfully to others, for example, in whole-class discussions. There is no low level disruption during lessons.
- Excellent arrangements are in place, including the morning drop-in groups, to support pupils who find it difficult to behave well all the time. As a result, their behaviour improves exceptionally well over time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils consistently move around the school in an orderly manner and behave very courteously towards adults and each other.
- They are extremely well informed about hazards they may meet in school or the wider world, recognising the harm that extremist behaviour can cause. Their knowledge of how to keep safe when using the internet is exemplary. Pupils themselves wrote the school's policy and provide very good advice for their parents on this aspect.
- Pupils have an outstanding awareness of the importance of adopting British values such as tolerance and respect. They are unfailingly polite and helpful to others, showing great respect for those who come from different backgrounds or cultures.
- Pupils fully support the values of British democracy and the importance of the rule of law. They hold elections for important roles carrying responsibility in school and are very well informed about school rules, despite staff having very little need to refer to these. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future education and citizenship in a democratic and culturally diverse society.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently at least good as a result of the strong procedures in place for checking and supporting the quality. Coaching and support strategies, extended over the last year, maintain consistency in key areas and rapid improvement in learning. The proportion of outstanding teaching is rising well.
- Most literacy skills are well taught. Staff are exceptionally good at increasing pupils' vocabulary and use of language. Until recently they have been less effective in the teaching of handwriting and spelling.
- The teaching of numeracy skills and how to use them has improved very well over the previous year. Progress in mathematics is accelerating as a result.
- A feature seen in all lessons that supports learning really well is that staff do not introduce new learning until they are absolutely sure that pupils really understand what they have learnt previously. Pupils then learn how to apply this learning, for example in undertaking new work, practising their skills until they are fully competent. This ensures pupils very effectively apply their skills and knowledge in different tasks.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is excellent because it is founded on mutual respect and pupils' understanding that adults want them to learn well.
- Teaching often ensures that pupils working at different stages know what they need to do to achieve and how they could do even better to reach their goal more quickly. However, this is not always the case, and progress slows for some pupils' learning when guidance about how pupils can improve it further is unclear or not challenging enough.
- The immediate advice given during lessons to pupils who are struggling or to extend the understanding of pupils who are learning quickly is very good. Adults have the knack of rarely telling pupils an answer, questioning them very effectively so pupils come to the solution themselves.
- There is a variation in quality, however, in the marking of pupils' work. Although some is exceptionally good, on a minority of occasions it is not clear to some pupils what they have achieved nor what they need to improve. In addition, it is not always evident that pupils have acted on the advice given and improved those areas identified by the teacher.
- Learning support assistants provide very good support, both in lessons and in special activities, to help pupils in danger of falling behind catch up.
- Home learning is very effectively linked to that in lessons and supports pupils' progress well.
- Pupils' individual improvement targets are adapted exceptionally well to meet the new curriculum and assessment requirements. These are referred to exceptionally well during lessons, with most pupils making good progress towards them, with rapid progress in some classes. However, as with lesson targets, a minority are too general, with the whole class having the same target despite there being pupils who are working at different stages of development.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Inspection evidence indicates that pupils make at least good progress from their starting points, most reaching at least the expected level (Level 4) in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 6. Attainment is above average.
- Attainment levels in reading and mathematics compare more favourably with national levels than in writing, due to a larger proportion reaching the higher levels (Levels 5 and 6). Accelerating progress indicates more pupils are well on course this year to attain the higher levels in national tests.
- Despite weaknesses in the phonic skills of a small minority of younger pupils, very well targeted support ensures their good progress and average attainment by Year 6. Most Year 6 pupils read widely and often from a range of different texts or genres. They quickly learn to use the textual clues to gain information or to predict what might happen next.
- Pupils' mathematical knowledge of place value and their calculation skills are very good. By Year 6, pupils work accurately and quickly when multiplying or dividing high numbers or decimals, including when working with negative numbers. They use these skills well when working with measures or data.
- Excellent arrangements for adapting the curriculum to include new government requirements have really paid off in mathematics. Pupils have a deep understanding of mathematical concepts and apply their knowledge exceptionally well in a range of problem solving tasks.
- During the inspection, Year 6 pupils undertook complex 'real life' business investigations using data. They accurately identified, for example, the optimum amount of fuel to use or the best times for a business to be open to customers, achieving exceptionally well as a result.
- 'Real life' activities are evident in many subjects. For example, pupils make very good use of their computing and writing skills to produce the school newspaper, The Solent News. Activities such as these help to ensure pupils are very well prepared well for the world of work.
- In writing, attainment has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of language pupils use is very effective, for example in describing the scene during the London Blitz during the Second World War as part of a task on diary writing. However, attainment is limited by pupils' weaker handwriting and spelling which often mars their work.
- The scrutiny of younger pupils' work indicates that handwriting and spelling are the weaker aspects of writing when pupils begin Year 3. However, until recently, this was not addressed quickly enough and pupils were slower in acquiring these skills. In spelling, improvement is now evident. Handwriting is improving more slowly, partly because teachers do not always reinforce the need for good presentation in written work.
- The school provides good support for pupils at risk of falling behind. This ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. Most reach average attainment levels by Year 6.
- The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well, as do the very small minority of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Very good use is made of additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils catch up with their classmates. Their achievement in reading and mathematics is very good. In these subjects they have closed the gap completely with national attainment levels, and are close to the attainment levels of their classmates. In writing their achievement is good. They are a term behind their classmates and half a term behind national levels by the end of Year 6.
- The school's excellent support for pupils from service families ensures their achievement is outstanding. Consequently, the large majority attain the higher levels in national tests.
- The most able pupils achieve well, consistently reaching attainment levels above those expected for their age. As the rate of progress accelerates, an increasing number of pupils are attaining the higher levels.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116193
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	448786

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 of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cheryl Lincoln
Headteacher	Elizabeth Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 March 2010
Telephone number	023 92375459
Fax number	023 92200163
Email address	office@solent-jun.portsmouth.sch.uk

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