

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



3 March 2016

Mrs L Wilby
Headteacher
Solent Infant School
Eveleigh Road
Farlington
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO6 1DH

Dear Mrs Wilby

Short inspection of Solent Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 3 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that the school has a strong sense of identity, firmly rooted in its core values. Spending time in the school provides clear confirmation that the values of care, respect, perseverance, teamwork, imagination and a love of learning are the glue that binds together all aspects of its work. Parents are very positive and hold you and the staff in high regard. Your mantra, 'Caring and learning together for a brighter future' captures the spirit of Solent Infant School. This is a thriving and popular school, where staff nurture and support pupils to do their very best. As a result, pupils are happy, enjoy school and behave well at all times. Parents, particularly those in the services, appreciate the high levels of care shown to their children. As a result, you have ensured that pupils display high levels of respect and are motivated to learn well.

You, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, display high levels of commitment and determination to improve the school further. School improvement planning is detailed and actions are thoughtfully considered and appropriate. Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 2 the vast majority achieve the standards expected for their age. Reading is a particular strength. Pupils enjoy books and achieve high standards; many achieve the higher levels. However, standards in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) check are below those seen nationally.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified a need to raise expectations of what pupils, particularly boys, can achieve in lessons, and to develop the school's strategy for community cohesion so that actions have a positive impact beyond the school and on pupils' awareness of other cultures and lifestyles.

Leaders have addressed all these aspects effectively so that:

- the majority of pupils, including boys, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, the vast majority of pupils achieved the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- pupils are knowledgeable about different cultures and traditions. They are proud that many of the children come from service families and use their experiences to enhance their knowledge of the wider world.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. You ensure high levels of support are afforded to all pupils. Service families particularly appreciate the care and guidance given to their children. As one parent commented, 'Children are given the time to talk to a trusted adult as and when the need arises.' Relationships between parents, staff and pupils are extremely positive and centred on meeting the needs of the pupils well.

Governors offer helpful support to school leaders. They attend safeguarding training alongside school staff. Consequently, they have a first-class understanding of the school's procedures. They make regular checks with school leaders to ensure that the school is a safe place to be. In addition, they gather the views of pupils, meeting with the school council from time to time. Governors promote pupils' good attendance well, working in partnership with Solent Junior School. Strategies to improve attendance have been highly successful and attendance is now above average.

Pupils understand the school's routines thoroughly. They know to evacuate the building calmly and sensibly during fire practices. Pupils acknowledge that adults look after them very well; they all feel there is someone to talk to if the need arises.

Inspection findings

- This is an outward-looking school that actively seeks and utilises the expertise of others. Leaders ensure that training opportunities fully support school improvement actions. For example, work with a local teaching school alliance has ensured the information leaders gather about pupils' performance is accurate. Strong partnership working contributes well to rising standards. You have firmly placed the school on an upward trajectory.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and standards are rising. More pupils are on track to meet the standards required at the end of Year 1 than in the past. Pupils are developing their skills well. They can confidently segment and blend tricky words. Some pupils are working at a high level. For example, when pupils were thinking about the 'oy' sound, a pupil identified

the word 'oyster' as following the letter pattern. Language-rich environments contribute well and pupils are quick to use helpful prompts to consolidate their recognition of new words. Occasionally activities lack appeal. When this is the case, pupils' levels of enthusiasm dip and learning slows.

- Pupils obtain very detailed and helpful feedback from their teachers. Pupils appreciate the guidance they receive, commenting, 'Our teachers always help us when we're stuck.' Teachers pay close attention to developing pupils' basic skills rapidly, such as using correct punctuation or applying spelling rules accurately to sentence-writing activities. As a result, pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills.
- Standards in reading, particularly at the end of Year 2, are high. Leaders work closely with parents to ensure that learning to read well is of a high priority. The school's book club encourages pupils to share books with parents, choose additional books of interest and become lifelong readers.
- The quality of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is a strength. Pupils develop an appreciation of other countries and cultures in special 'Where in the world?' assemblies. Using pupils' experiences, including those of service families, pupils develop a secure understanding of the wider world. For example, during a recent assembly, pupils thoughtfully drew comparisons between lifestyles in the United Kingdom compared with those in Kuwait.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and each other. The value of 'a love of learning' exemplifies this positive approach. Members of the school council are proud of the part they play and appreciate the importance of their role. They say that Solent Infant pupils are special because 'We care about our school and look after it.' Inspection evidence suggests this is very much the case.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders check the progress of all learners methodically, and they are quick to put in additional support when it is required. This ensures that pupils are able to access a variety of support programmes that support their learning needs well.
- Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and it is now above average. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders have been very effective at addressing the lower attendance of some groups of pupils including the disadvantaged. Absence rates in this group are declining rapidly.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. About half start school with the skills and understanding typical for their age. Many make rapid progress in developing their skills and are well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well in reading. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils' attainment compared with their peers have closed completely and they achieve higher standards than other pupils nationally. However, this group's attainment is slightly lower in writing when compared with their peers. Leaders have rightly identified this aspect as an area to improve. Disadvantaged pupils are now making more rapid progress and gaps are beginning to narrow.
- Leaders ensure that parents receive regular and timely information about how well their child is progressing. There are also regular curriculum events to share with parents the school's approach to teaching and learning. One parent commented, 'The school is excellent at communicating with parents and keeping us informed about the curriculum and how we can support our own children's learning. There are also plenty of opportunities to view my child's work and see how they are progressing.'
- Pupils enjoy all aspects of learning. Engaging topics like 'To infinity and beyond' and a comprehensive menu of additional activities such as football, dance and the popular 'quizzical owls' club all contribute well to pupils' positive approach to school life.
- Parents are tremendously positive about all aspects of the school. Such is their level of commendation that all would recommend the school to others. Parents readily praise the school's caring and nurturing atmosphere, their child's enjoyment of school and the effectiveness of school leaders as key strengths of the school.
- The local authority provides minimal support to school leaders. Although officers have rightly identified standards in the Year 1 phonics check as requiring improvement, additional support to improve standards has not been forthcoming. Consequently, local authority support has had very little impact on raising standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- more pupils meet the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics check by ensuring that activities hold sufficient appeal.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Portsmouth City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, pupils and three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. We visited six classes and scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of 80 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I observed pupils' behaviour on arrival at school and during the school day. I spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.